# THE HUDSON REVIEW

*Volume 1, Number 3 • Autumn, 1948*


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THE HUDSON REVIEW is published quarterly by The Hudson Review, Inc., 39 West 11th Street, New York 11, N. Y. Subscriptions $3 per year; Canada $3.50; foreign $4. Single copy $1; in Canada, $1.15. Manuscripts will not be returned unless accompanied by stamped, self-addressed envelopes. Copyright 1948 by The Hudson Review, Inc. Registered U. S. Patent Office. Application for entry as second-class matter is pending.

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# *Lectures of Wendell Kretschmar**

*THOMAS MANN*

WENDELL KRETSCHMAR, at that time still young, at most in the second half of his twenties, was born in the state of Pennsylvania of German-American parentage. He had got his musical education in his country of origin; but he was early drawn back to the old world whence his grandparents had once migrated, and where his own roots lay and those of his art. In the course of his wanderings, the stages and sojourns of which seldom lasted more than a year or so, he had become our organist in Kaisersaschern. It was only an episode, preceded by others (he had worked as conductor in small state theatres in the Reich and Switzerland) and followed certainly by others still. He had even appeared as composer and produced an opera, *The Statue,* which was well received and played on many stages.

Unpretentious in appearance, a short, thickset, bullet-headed man with a little clipped moustache and brown eyes prone to laughter, with now a musing and now a pouncing look, he might have meant a real boon to the cultural life of Kaisersaschern if there had been any such life to begin with. His organ-playing was expert and excellent, but you could count on the fingers of one hand the number of those in the community able to appreciate it. Even so, a considerable number of people were attracted by his free afternoon concerts, in which he regaled us with organ music by Michael Pretorius, Froberger, Buxtehude, and of course Sebastian Bach, also all sort of curious genre compositions from the time between Handel's and Haydn's highest periods. Adrian and

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I attended the concerts regularly. A complete failure, on the other hand, at least to all appearance, were the lectures which he held indefatigably throughout a whole season in the hall of the Society of Activities for the Common Weal, accompanied by illustrations on the piano and demonstrations on a blackboard. They were a failure in the first place because our population had on principle no use for lectures; and secondly because his themes were not popular but rather capricious and out of the ordinary; and in the third place because his stutter made listening to them a nerve-racking occupation, sometimes bringing your heart into your mouth, sometimes tempting you to laughter, and altogether calculated to distract your attention from the intellectual treat in anxious expectation of the next convulsion.

His stutter was of a particularly typical and developed kind—tragic, because he was a man gifted with great and urgent riches of thought, passionately addicted to giving out information. And his little bark would move upon the waters by stretches swift and dancing, with a suspicious ease that might make one forget and scout his affliction. But inevitably, from time to time, while constantly and only too justifiably awaited, came the moment of disaster; and there he stood with red, swollen face on the rack; whether stuck on a sibilant, which he weathered with wide-stretched mouth, making the noise of an engine giving off steam; or wrestling with a labial, his cheeks puffed out, his lips launched into a crackling quick-fire of short, soundless explosions; or finally, when with his breathing in helpless disorder, his mouth like a funnel, he would gasp for breath like a fish out of water; laughing with tears in his eyes, for it is a fact that he himself seemed to treat the thing as a joke. Not everybody could take that consoling view; the public was really not to be blamed if it avoided the lectures with that degree of unanimity that in fact several times not more than half a dozen hearers occupied the seats; my parents, Adrian's uncle, young Cimabue, the two of us, and a few pupils from the girls' high school, who did not fail to giggle when the speaker stuttered.

Kretschmar would have been ready to defray out of his own

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pocket such expenses for hall and lighting as were not covered by the ticket money. But my father and Nikolaus Leverkühn had arranged in committee to have the society make up the deficit, or rather relinquish the charge for the hall, on the plea that the lectures were important for culture and served the common good. That was a friendly gesture; the effect on the common weal was doubtful, since the community did not attend them, in part, as I said, because of the all too specialized character of the subjects treated. Wendell Kretschmar honored the principle, which we repeatedly heard from his lips, first formed by the English tongue, that to arouse interest was not a question of the interest of others, but of our own; it could only be done, but then infallibly was, if one was fundamentally interested in a thing oneself, so that when one talked about it one could hardly help drawing others in, infecting them with it, and so creating an interest up to then not present or dreamed of. And that was worth a great deal more than catering to one already existent.

It was a pity that our public gave him almost no opportunity to prove his theory. With us few, sitting at his feet in the yawning emptiness of the old hall with the numbered chairs, he proved it conclusively, for he held us charmed by things of which we should never have thought they could so capture our attention; even his frightful impediment did in the end only affect us as a stimulating and compelling expression of the zeal he felt. Often did we all nod at him consolingly when the calamity came to pass, and one or the other of the gentlemen would utter a soothing "There, there!" or "It's all right," or "Never mind!" Then the spasm would relax in a merry, apologetic smile and things would run on again in almost uncanny fluency, for a while.

What did he talk about? Well, the man was capable of spending a whole hour on the question: Why did Beethoven not write a third movement to the Piano Sonata Opus 111? It is without doubt a matter worth discussing. But think of it in the light of the posters outside the hall of Activities for the Common Weal, or inserted in the Kaisersaschern *Railway Journal,* and ask yourself the amount of public interest it could arouse. People posi-

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tively did not want to know why Op. 111 has only two movements. We who were present at the explanation had indeed an uncommonly enriching evening, and this although the sonata under discussion was to that date entirely unknown to us. Still it was precisely through these lectures that we got to know it, and as a matter of fact very much in detail; for Kretschmar played it to us on the inferior cottage piano that was all he could command, a grand piano not being granted him. He played it capitally despite the rumbling noise the instrument made; analyzing its intellectual content with great impressiveness as he went, describing the circumstances under which it—and two others—were written and expatiating with caustic wit upon the master's own explanation of the reason why he had not done a third movement corresponding to the first. Beethoven, it seems, had calmly answered this question, put by his famulus, by saying that he had not had time and therefore had somewhat extended the second movement. No time! And he had said it "calmly," to boot. The contempt for the questioner which lay in such an answer had obviously not been noticed, but it was justified contempt. And now the speaker described Beethoven's condition in the year 1820, when his hearing, attacked by a resistless ailment, was in progressive decay, and it had already become clear that he could no longer conduct his own works. Kretschmar told us about the rumors that the famous author was quite written out, his productive powers exhausted, himself incapable of larger enterprises, and busying himself like the old Haydn with writing down Scottish songs. Such reports had continually gained ground, because for several years no work of importance bearing his name had come on the market. But in the late autumn, returning to Vienna from Mödling, where he had spent the summer, the master had sat down and written these three compositions for the piano without, so to speak, once looking up from the notes, all in one burst, and gave notice of them to his patron, the Count of Brunswick, to reassure him as to his mental condition. And then Kretschmar talked about the Sonata in C minor, which indeed it was not easy to see as a well-rounded and intellectually digested work, and

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which had given his contemporary critics, and his friends as well, a hard æsthetic nut to crack. These friends and admirers, Kretschmar said, simply could not follow the man they revered beyond the height to which at the time of his maturity he had brought the symphony, the piano sonata, and the classical string quartet. In the works of the last period they stood with heavy hearts before a process of dissolution or alienation, of a mounting into an air no longer familiar or safe to meddle with: even before a *plus ultra,* wherein they had been able to see nothing else than a degeneration of tendencies previously present, an excess of introspection and speculation, an extravagance of minutiæ and scientific musicality—applied sometimes to such simple material as the arietta theme of the monstrous movement of variations which forms the second part of this sonata. The theme of this movement goes through a hundred vicissitudes, a hundred worlds of rhythmic contrasts, at length outgrows itself, and is finally lost in giddy heights that one might call other-worldly or abstract. And in just that very way Beethoven's art had overgrown itself, risen out of the habitable regions of tradition, even before the startled gaze of human eyes, into spheres of the entirely and utterly and nothing-but personal—an ego painfully isolated in the absolute, isolated too from sense by the loss of his hearing; lonely prince of a realm of spirits, from whom now only a chilling breath issued to terrify his most willing contemporaries, standing as they did aghast at these communications of which only at moments, only by exception, they could understand anything at all.

So far, so good, said Kretschmar. And yet again, good or right only conditionally and incompletely. For one would usually connect with the conception of the merely personal, ideas of limitless subjectivity and of radical harmonic will to expression, in contrast to polyphonic objectivity (Kretschmar was concerned to have us impress upon our minds this distinction between harmonic subjectivity and polyphonic objectivity) and this equation, this contrast, here as altogether in the masterly late works, would simply not apply. As a matter of fact, Beethoven had been far

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more "subjective," not to say far more "personal," in his middle period than in his last, had been far more bent on taking all the flourishes, formulas, and conventions, of which music is certainly full, and consuming them in the personal expression, melting them into the subjective dynamic. The relation of the later Beethoven to the conventional, say in the last five piano sonatas, is, despite all the uniqueness and even uncanniness of the formal language, quite different, much more complaisant and easy-going. Untouched, untransformed by the subjective, convention often appeared in the late works, in a baldness, one might say exhaustiveness, an abandonment of self, with an effect more majestic and awful than any reckless plunge into the personal. In these forms, said the speaker, the subjective and the conventional assumed a new relationship, conditioned by death.

At this word Kretschmar stuttered violently; sticking fast at the first sound and executing a sort of machine-gun fire with his tongue on the roof of his mouth, with jaw and chin both quivering, before they settled on the vowel which told us what he meant. But when we had guessed it, it seemed hardly proper to take it out of his mouth and shout it to him, as we sometimes did, in jovial helpfulness. He had to say it himself and he did. Where greatness and death come together, he declared, there arises an objectivity tending to the conventional, which in its majesty leaves the most domineering subjectivity far behind, because therein the merely personal—which had after all been the surmounting of a tradition already brought to its peak—once more outgrew itself, in that it entered into the mythical, the collectively great and supernatural.

He did not ask if we understood that, nor did we ask ourselves. When he gave it as his view that the main point was to hear it, we fully agreed. It was in the light of what he had said, he went on, that the work he was speaking of in particular, Sonata Op. 111, was to be regarded. And then he sat down at the cottage piano and played us the whole composition out of his head, the first and the incredible second movement, shouting his comments into the midst of his playing and in order to make us conscious of

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the treatment demonstrating here and there in his enthusiasm by singing as well; altogether it made a spectacle partly entrancing, partly funny; and repeatedly greeted with merriment by his little audience. For as he had a very powerful attack and exaggerated the *forte*, he had to shriek extra loud to make what he said halfway intelligible and to sing with all the strength of his lungs to emphasize vocally what he played. With his lips he imitated what the hands played. "Tum-tum, tum-tum, tum-tr-r!" he went, as he played the grim and startling first notes of the first movement; he sang in a high falsetto the passages of melodic loveliness by which the ravaged and tempestuous skies of the composition are at intervals brightened as though by faint glimpses of light. At last he laid his hands in his lap, was quiet a moment, and then said: "Here it comes!" and began the variations movement, the "*adagio molto semplice e cantabile.*"

The arietta theme, destined to vicissitudes for which in its idyllic innocence it would seem not to be born, is presented at once and announced in sixteen bars, reducible to a motif which appears at the end of its first half, like a brief soul-cry—only three notes, a quaver, a semiquaver, and a dotted crotchet to be scanned as, say: "heav-en's blue, lov-ers' pain, fare-thee well, on a-time, mead-ow-land"—and that is all. What now happens to this mild utterance, rhythmically, harmonically, contrapuntally, to this pensive, subdued formulation, with what its master blesses and to what condemns it, into what black nights and dazzling flashes, crystal spheres wherein coldness and heat, repose and ecstasy, are one and the same, he flings it down and lifts it up, all that one may well call vast, strange, extravagantly magnificent, without thereby giving it a name, because it is quite truly nameless; and with laboring hands Kretschmar played us all those enormous transformations, singing at the same time with the greatest violence: "Dim-dada!" and mingling his singing with shouts: "These chains of trills!" he yelled. "These flourishes and cadenzas! Do you hear the conventions that are left in? Here—the language is no longer—purified of the flourishes—but the flourishes—of the appearance—of their subjective—domination—the

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appearance—of art is thrown off—at last—art always throws off the appearance of art. Dim-dada! Do listen, how here—the melody is dragged down by the centrifugal weight of chords! It becomes static, monotonous—twice D, three times D, one after the other—the chords do it—dim-dada! Now notice what happens here—"

It was extraordinarily difficult to listen to his shouts and to the highly complicated music both at once. We all tried. We strained, leaning forward, hands between knees, looking by turn at his hands and his mouth. The characteristic of the movement of course is the wide gap between bass and treble, between the right and the left hand, and a moment comes, an utterly extreme situation, when the poor little motif seems to hover alone and forsaken above a giddy yawning abyss—a procedure of awe-inspiring unearthliness, to which then succeeds a distressful making-of-itself-small, a start of fear as it were, that such a thing could happen. Much else happens before the end. But when it ends and while it ends, something comes, after so much rage, persistence, obstinacy, extravagance: something entirely unexpected and touching in its mildness and goodness. With the motif passed through many vicissitudes, which takes leave and so doing becomes itself entirely leave-taking, a parting wave and call, with this D G G occurs a slight change, it experiences a small melodic expansion. After an introductory C, it puts a C sharp before the D, so that it no longer scans "heav-en's blue," "mead-owland," but "O-thou heaven's blue," "Green-est meadowland," "Fare-thee well for aye," and this added C sharp is the most moving, consolatory, pathetically reconciling thing in the world. It is like having one's hair or cheek stroked, lovingly, understandingly, like a deep and silent farewell look. It blesses the object, the frightfully harried formulation, with overpowering humanity, lies in parting so gently on the hearer's heart in eternal farewell that the eyes run over. "Now for-get the pain," it says. "Great was—God in us." " 'Twas all—but a dream," "Friendly—be to me." Then it breaks off. Quick, hard triplets hasten to a conclusion with which any other piece might have ended.

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Kretschmar did not return from the piano to his desk. He sat on his revolving stool with his face turned towards us, in the same position as ours, bent over, hands between his knees, and in a few words brought to an end his lecture on why Beethoven had not written a third movement to Op. 111. We had only needed, he said, to hear the piece to answer the question ourselves. A third movement? A new approach? A return after this parting—impossible! It had happened that the sonata had come, in the second, enormous movement, to an end, an end without any return. And when he said "the sonata," he meant not only this one in C minor, but the sonata in general, as a species, as traditional art-form; it itself was here at an end, brought to its end, it had fulfilled its destiny, reached its goal, beyond which there was no going, it cancelled and resolved itself, it took leave—the gesture of farewell of the D G G motif, consoled by the C sharp, was a leave-taking in this sense too, great as the whole piece itself, the farewell of the sonata form.

With this Kretschmar went away, accompanied by thin but prolonged applause, and we went too, not a little reflective, weighed down by all these novelties. Most of us, as usual, as we put on our coats and hats and walked out, hummed bemusedly to ourselves the impression of the evening, the theme-generating motif of the second movement, in its original and its leave-taking form, and for a long time we heard it like an echo from the remoter streets into which the audience dispersed, the quiet night streets of the little town: "Fare—thee well," "Fare thee well for aye." "Great was God in us."

That was not the last time we heard the stutterer on Beethoven. He spoke again soon, this time on "Beethoven and the Fugue." This lecture too I remember quite clearly, and see the announcement before me, perfectly aware that it, as little as the other, was likely to produce in the hall of the "Common Weal" any crowd so large as to endanger life and limb. But our little group got from this evening too the most positive pleasure and profit. Always, we were told, the opponents and rivals of the bold innovator asserted that Beethoven could not write a fugue. "That he

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just cannot," they said, and probably they knew what they were talking about, for this respectable art-form stood at the time in high honor, and no composer found favor in the high court of music or satisfied the commands of the potentates and great gentlemen who issued them if he did not stand his man in the perfection of the fugue. Prince Esterházy was an especial friend of this master art, but in the Mass in C which Beethoven wrote for him, the composer, after unsuccessful attempts, had not arrived at a fugue; even socially considered, that was a discourtesy, but artistically it had been an unpardonable lack, and the oratorio *Christ on the Mount of Olives* altogether lacked any fugue form, although it would have been most proper there. Such a feeble effort as the fugue in the third quarter of Op. 59 was not calculated to counteract the view that the great man was a bad contrapuntist—in which the opinion of the authoritative musical world could only have been strengthened by the passages in fugue form in the funeral march in the "*Eroica*" and the Allegretto of the A-major Symphony. And now the closing movement of the Cello Sonata in D, Op. 102, superscribed "Allegro fugato"! The outcry, the fist-shaking, had been great, Kretschmar told us. Unclear to the point of unenjoyableness, that was what they taxed the whole with being; but at least for twenty bars long, they said, there reigned such scandalous confusion—principally in consequence of too strongly colored modulations—that after it one could close the case for the incapacity of this man to write in the "strict style."

I interrupt myself in my reproduction to remark that the lecturer was talking about matters and things in the world of art, situations that had never come within our horizon and only appeared now on its margin in shadowy wise through the always compromised medium of his speech. We were unable to check up on it except through his own explanatory performances on the cottage piano, and we listened to it all with the dimly excited fantasy of children hearing a fairy-story they do not undersand, while their tender minds are none the less in a strange, dreamy, intuitive way enriched and advantaged. Fugue, counterpoint,

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"*Eroica*," "confusion in consequence of too strongly coloured modulations," "strict style"—all that was just magic spells to us, but we heard it as greedily, as large-eyed, as children always hear what they do not understand or what is even entirely unsuitable —indeed, with far more pleasure than the familiar, fitting, and adequate can give them. Is it believable that this is the most intensive, splendid, perhaps the very most productive way of learning: the anticipatory way, learning that spans wide stretches of ignorance? As a pedagogue I suppose I should not speak in its behalf; but I do know that it profits youth extraordinarily. And I believe that the stretches jumped over fill in of themselves in time.

Beethoven, then, so we heard, was reputed not to be able to write a fugue; and now the question was how far this malicious criticism was true. Obviously he had taken pains to refute it. Several times he had written fugues into his later piano music, and indeed in three voices: in the "*Hammerklavier*" Sonata as well as the one in A major. Once he had added: "with some liberties" ("*mit einigen Freiheiten*"), in token that the rules he had offended against were well known to him. Why he ignored them, whether arbitrarily or because he had not managed it, remained a vexed question. And then had come the great fugue overture, Op. 124, and the majestic fugues in the Gloria and the Credo in evidence at last that in the struggle with this angel the great wrestler had conquered, even though thereafter he halted on his thigh.

Kretschmar told us a frightful story, impressing upon our minds an unforgettable and awful picture of the sacred trials of this struggle and the person of the afflicted artist. It was in high summer of the year 1819, at the time when Beethoven was working on the *Missa Solemnis* in the Haffner house at Mödling, in despair because each movement turned out much longer than he had anticipated, so that the date of completion, March of the following year, in which the installation of the Archduke Rudolf as Bishop of Olmütz was to take place, could not possibly be kept to. It was then that two friends and professional colleagues

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visited him one afternoon and found an alarming state of things. That same morning the master's two maids had made off, for the night before, at about one o'clock, there had been a furious quarrel, rousing the whole house from slumber. The master had wrought late into the night, on the Credo, the Credo with the fugue, without a thought of the meal that stood waiting on the hearth; while the maids, yielding to nature, had at last fallen asleep. When the master, between twelve and one, demanded something to eat, he found the maids asleep, the food burnt and dried up; he had burst into the most violent rage, sparing the nightly rest of the house the less because he himself could not hear the noise he made. "Could you not watch one hour with me?" he kept thundering. But it had been five or six hours, and the outraged maidservants had fled at dawn, leaving such an ill-tempered master to himself, so that he had had no midday meal either—nothing at all since the middle-day before. Instead he worked in his room on the Credo, the Credo with the fugue —the young ones heard him through the closed door. The deaf man sang, he yelled and stamped above the Credo—it was so moving and terrifying that the blood froze in their veins as they listened. But as in their great concern they were about to retreat, the door was jerked open and Beethoven stood there—in what guise? The very most frightful! With clothing dishevelled, his features so distorted as to strike terror to the beholders; the eyes dazed, absent, listening, all at once; he had stared at them, they got the impression that he had come out of a life-and-death struggle with all the opposing hosts of counterpoint. He had stammered something unintelligible, and then burst out complaining and scolding at the fine kind of housekeeping he had, and how everybody had run away and left him to starve. They had tried to pacify him, one of them helped him to put his clothing to rights, the other ran to the inn to get him some solid food. . . . Only three years later was the Mass finished.

Thus Kretschmar, on "Beethoven and the Fugue"; and certainly it gave us matter for talk on the way home—ground too for being silent together and for vague and silent reflection upon

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the new, the far, and the great, which sometimes glibly running on, sometimes appallingly impeded, had penetrated into our souls. I say into ours, but it is of course only Adrian's that I have in mind. What I heard, what I took in, is quite irrelevant.

What principally impressed him, as I heard while we were walking home, and also next day in the school courtyard, was Kretschmar's distinction between cult epochs and cultural epochs, and his remark that the secularization of art, its separation from divine service, bore only a superficial and episodic character. The pupil of the upper school appeared to be struck by the thought, which the lecturer had not expressed at all but had kindled in him, that the separation of art from the liturgical whole, its liberation and elevation into the individual and culturally self-purposive, had laden it with an irrelevant solemnity, an absolute seriousness, a pathos of suffering, which was imagined in Beethoven's frightful apparition in the doorway, and which did not need to be its abiding destiny, its permanent intellectual constitution. Hearken to the youth! Still almost without any real or practical experience in the field of art, he speculated in the void and in precocious language of the probably imminent retreat from its present role to a more modest, happier one in the service of a higher union, which did not need to be, as it once was, the Church. What it would be he could not say. But that the cultural idea was a historically transitory phenomenon, that it could lose itself again in another one, that the future did not inevitably belong to it, this thought he had certainly singled out from Kretschmar's lecture.

"But the alternative," I threw in, "to culture is barbarism."

"Permit me," said he. "After all, barbarism is the opposite of culture only within the order of thought which it gives us. Outside of it the opposite may be something quite different or no opposite at all."

I imitated Luca Cimabue, saying: "Santa Maria!" and crossing myself. He gave his short laugh. Another time he asserted:

"For a cultural epoch, there seems to me to be a spot too much talk about culture in ours, don't you think? I'd like to know

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whether epochs that possessed culture knew the word at all, or used it. Naïveté, unconsciousness, taken-for-grantedness, seems to me to be the first criterion of the constitution to which we give this name. What we are losing is just this naïveté, and this lack, if one may so speak of it, protects us from many a colourful barbarism which altogether perfectly agreed with culture, even with very high culture. I mean: our stage is that of civilization—a very praiseworthy state no doubt, but also neither was there any doubt that we should have to become very much more barbaric to be capable of culture again. Technique and comfort —in that state one talks about culture but one has not got it. Will you prevent me from seeing in the homophone-melodic constitution of our music a condition of musical civilization—in contrast to the old contrapuntal polyphone culture?"

In such talk, with which he teased and irritated me, there was much that was merely imitative. But he had a way of adapting what he picked up and giving it a personal character which took from his adaptations anything that might sound ridiculous, if not everything boyish and derivative. He commented a good deal too—or we commented in lively exchange—on a lecture of Kretschmar's called "Music and the Eye"—likewise an offering which deserved a larger audience. As the title indicates, our lecturer spoke of his art in so far as—or rather, also as—it appeals to the sense of sight, which, so he developed his theme, it does in that one puts it down, through the notation, the tonal writing which—since the days of the old neumes, those arrangements of strokes and points, which had more or less indicated the flow of sound—had been practised with growing care and pains. His demonstration became very diverting, and likewise flattering, since it assumed in us a certain apprentice and brush-washer intimacy with music. Many a turn of phrase in musician's jargon came not from the acoustic but the visual, the note-picture: for instance, one speaks of *occhiali* because the broken drum-basses, half-notes that are coupled by a stroke through their necks, look like a pair of spectacles; or as one calls "cobbler's patches" (*rosalia*) certain cheap sequences one after another in stages at

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like intervals (he wrote examples for us on the blackboard). He spoke of the mere appearance of musical notation, and assured us that a knowledgeable person could get from one look at the notation a decisive impression of the spirit and value of a composition. Thus it had once happened to him that a colleague, visiting his room where an uninspired work submitted to him by a dilettante was spread out on the desk, had shouted out: "Well, for heaven's sake, what sort of tripe is that you've got there?" On the other hand he sketched for us the enchanting pleasure which even the visual picture of a score by Mozart afforded to the practised eye; the clarity of the texture, the beautiful disposition of the instrumental groups, the ingenious and varied writing of the melodic line. A deaf man, he cried, quite ignorant of sound, could not but delight in these gracious visions. "To hear with eyes belongs to love's fine wit," he quoted from a Shakespeare sonnet, and asserted that in all time composers had secretly nested in their writings things that were meant more for the reading eye than for the ear. When, for instance, the Dutch masters of polyphony in their endless devices for the crossing of parts had so arranged them contrapuntally that one part had been like another when read backwards; that could not be perceived by the way they actually sounded, and he would wager that very few people would have detected the trick by ear, for it was intended rather for the eye of the guild. Thus Orlandus Lassus in the *Marriage of Cana* used six voices to represent the six water-jugs, which could be better perceived by seeing the music than by hearing it; and in the *St. John Passion* by Joachim von Burck "one of the servants," who gave Jesus a slap in the face, has only one note, but on the "*zween*" (two) in the next phrase, "with him two others," there are two.

He produced several such Pythagorean jests, intended more for the eye than the ear, which music had now and again been pleased to make and came out roundly with the statement that in the last analysis he ascribed to the art a certain inborn lack of the sensuous, yes an anti-sensuality, a secret tendency to asceticism. Music was actually the most intellectual of all the

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arts, as was evident from the fact that in it, as in no other, form and content are interwoven and absolutely one and the same. We say of course that music "addresses itself to the ear"; but it does so only in a qualified way, only in so far, namely, as the hearing, like the other senses, is the deputy, the instrument, and the receiver of the mind. Perhaps, said Kretschmar, it was music's deepest wish not to be heard at all, nor even seen, nor yet felt; but only—if that were possible—in some Beyond, the other side of sense and sentiment, to be perceived and contemplated as pure mind, pure spirit. But bound as she was to the world of sense, music must ever strive after the strongest, yes, the most seductive sensuous realization: she is a Kundry, who wills not what she does and flings soft arms of lust round the neck of the fool. Her most powerful realization for the senses she finds in orchestral music, where through the ear she seems to affect all the senses with her opiate wand and to mingle the pleasures of the realm of sound with those of colour and scent. Here, rightly, she was the penitent in the garb of the seductress. But there was an instrument—that is to say, a musical means of realization—through which music, while becoming audible to the sense of hearing, did so in a half-unsensuous, an almost abstract way, audible, that is, in a way peculiarly suited to its intellectual nature. He meant the piano, an instrument that is not an instrument at all in the sense of the others, since all specialization is foreign to it. It can, indeed, like them, be used in a solo performance and as a medium of virtuosity; but that is the exceptional case and speaking very precisely a misuse. The piano, properly speaking, is the direct and sovereign representative of music itself in its intellectuality, and for that reason one must learn it. But piano lessons should not be—or not essentially and not first and last—lessons in a special ability, but lessons in m-m—

"Music!" cried a voice from the tiny audience, for the speaker could simply not get the word out, often as he had used it before, but kept on mumbling the *m*.

"Yes, of course," said he, released and relieved. Took a swallow of water and went his way.

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But perhaps I may be pardoned for letting him appear once more. For I am concerned with a fourth lecture which he gave us, and I would have left out one of the others if necessary, rather than this, since no other—not to speak of myself—made such a deep impression on Adrian.

I cannot recollect its exact title. It was "The Elemental in Music" or "Music and the Elemental" or "The Elements of Music" or something like that. In any case the elemental, the primitive, the primeval beginning, played the chief role in it, as well as the idea that among all the arts it was precisely music that —whatever the richly complicated and finely developed and marvellous structure she had developed into in the course of the centuries—had never got rid of a religious attitude towards her own beginnings; a pious proneness to call them up in solemn invocation—in short, to celebrate her elements. She thus celebrates, he said, her cosmic aptitude for allegory; for those elements were, as it were, the first and simplest materials of the world, a parallelism of which a philosophizing artist of a day not long gone by—it was Wagner again of whom he spoke—had shrewdly, perhaps with somewhat too mechanical, too ingenious cleverness, made use, in that he made the basic elements of music in his cosmogonic myth of the *Ring* one with those of the world. To him the beginning of all things had its music: the music of the beginning was that, and also the beginning of music, the E-flat major triad of the flowing depths of the Rhine, the seven primitive chords, out of which, as though out of blocks of Cyclopean masonry, primeval stone, the "Götterburg" arose. Surprisingly brilliant in the grand style he presented the mythology of music at the same time with that of the world; in that he bound the music to the things and made them express themselves in music, he created an apparatus of sensuous simultaneity—most magnificent and heavy with meaning, if a bit too clever after all, in comparison with certain revelations of the elemental in the art of the pure musicians, Beethoven and Bach; for example, in the prelude to the cello suite of the latter—also an E-flat major piece, built up in primitive triads. And he spoke of Anton Bruckner,

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who loved to refresh himself at the organ or piano by the simple succession of triads. "Is there anything more heartfelt, more glorious," he would cry, "than such a progression of mere triads? Is it not like a purifying bath for the mind?" This saying too, Kretschmar thought, was a piece of evidence worth thinking about, for the tendency of music to plunge back into the elemental and admire herself in her primitive beginnings.

Yes, the lecturer cried, it lay in the very nature of this singular art that it was at any moment capable of beginning at the beginning, of discovering itself afresh out of nothing, bare of all knowledge of its past cultural history, and of creating anew. It would then run through the same primitive stages as in its historical beginnings and could on one short course, apart from the main massif of its development, alone and unheeded by the world, reach most extraordinary and singular heights. And now he told us a story which in the most fantastic and suggestive way fitted into the frame of his present theme.

At about the middle of the eighteenth century there had flourished in his native home in Pennsylvania a German community of pious folk belonging to the Baptist sect. Their leading and spiritually most respected members lived celibate lives and had therefore been honoured with the name of Solitary Brethren and Sisters; but the majority of them reconciled with the married state an exemplarily pure and godly manner of life, strictly regulated, hard-working and dietetically sound, full of sacrifice and self-discipline. Their settlements had been two: one called Ephrata, in Lancaster County, the other in Franklin County, called Snowhill; and they had all looked up reverently to their head shepherd and spiritual father, the founder of the sect, a man named Beissel, in whose character fervent devotion to God mingled with the qualities of leadership, and fanatic religiosity with a lively and blunt-spoken energy.

Johann Conrad Beissel had been born of very poor parents at Eberbach in the Palatinate and early orphaned. He had learned the baker's trade and as a roving journeyman had made connections with Pietists and devotees of the Baptist confession, which

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had awakened in him slumbering inclinations towards an explicit service of the truth and a freely arising conviction of God. All this had brought him dangerously near to a sphere regarded in his country as heretical, and the thirty-year-old man decided to flee from the intolerance of the Old World and emigrate to America. There, in various places, in Germantown and Conestoga, he worked for a while as a weaver. Then a fresh impulse of religious devotion came over him and he had followed his inward voice, leading as a hermit in the wilderness an entirely solitary and meagre life, fixed only upon God. But as it will happen that flight from mankind sometimes only involves the more with humanity the man who flees, so Beissel had soon seen himself surrounded by a troop of admiring followers and imitators of his way of life, and instead of being free of the world, he had unexpectedly become, in the turning of a hand, the head of a community, which quickly developed into an independent sect, the Seventh-Day Anabaptists. He commanded them the more absolutely in that, so far as he knew, he had never sought the leadership, but was rather called to it against his intention and desire.

Beissel had never enjoyed any education worth mentioning; but in his awakened state he had mastered by himself the skills of reading and writing, and as his mind surged like the sea, tumultuous with mystical feelings and ideas, the result was that he filled his office chiefly as writer and poet and fed the souls of his flock: a stream of didactic prose and religious songs poured from his pen to the edification of the brethren in their silent hours and to the enrichment of their services. His style was high-flown and cryptic, laden with metaphor, obscure Scriptural allusions, and a sort of erotic symbolism. A tract on the Sabbath, *Mysterion Anomalias,* and a collection of ninety-nine *Mystical and Very Secret Sayings* were the beginning. A series of hymns followed on, which were to be sung to well-known European choral melodies, and appeared in print under such titles as *Songs for God's Love and Praise, Jacob's Place of Struggle and Elevation, Zionist Hill of Incense.* It was these little collections that a few years later, enlarged and improved, became the official song-book of the

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Seventh-Day Baptists of Ephrata, with the sweetly mournful title "Song of the Lonely and Forsaken Turtle Dove, the Christian Church." Printed and reprinted, further enriched by the emulative members of the sect, single and married, men and even more women, the standard work changed its title and also appeared once as *Miracle Play in Paradise*. It finally contained not less than seven hundred and seventy hymns, among them some with an enormous number of stanzas.

The songs were meant to be sung, but they lacked music. They were new texts to old tunes and were so used for years by the community. But now a new inspiration visited Johann Conrad Beissel. The spirit commanded him to take to himself in addition to the role of poet and prophet that of composer.

There had been a young man staying at Ephrata, a young adept of the art of music, who held a singing-class; Beissel loved to attend and listen to the instruction. He must thus have made the discovery that music afforded possibilities for the extension and realization of the kingdom of the spirit, in a way of which young Herr Ludwig never dreamed. The extraordinary man's resolve was swiftly formed. No longer of the youngest, already far on in the fifties, he applied himself to work out a musical theory of his own, suited to his special requirements. He put the singing teacher aside and took things firmly in his own hands—with such success that before long he had made music the most important element in the religious life of the community.

Most of the chorals, which had come over from Europe, seemed to him much too forced, complicated, and artificial to serve for his flock. He wanted to do something new and better and to inaugurate a music better answering to the simplicity of their souls and enabling them by practice to bring it to their own simple perfection. An ingenious and practical theory of melody was swiftly and boldly resolved on. He decreed that there should be "masters" and "servants" in every scale. Having decided to regard the common chord as the melodic centre of any given key, he called "masters" the notes belonging to this chord, and the rest of the scale "servants." And those syllables of a text upon which the

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accent lay had always to be presented by a "master," the unaccented by a "servant."

As for the harmony, he made use of a summary procedure. He made chord-tables for all possible keys, with the help of which anybody could write out his tunes comfortably enough, in four or five parts; and thus be caused a perfect rage for composition in the community. Soon there was no longer a single Seventh-Day Baptist, whether male or female, who, thus assisted, had not imitated the master and composed music.

Rhythm was now the part of theory which remained to be dealt with by this redoubtable man. He accomplished it with consummate success. He painstakingly followed with the music the cadence of the words, simply by providing the accented syllables with longer notes, and giving the unaccented shorter ones. To establish a fixed relation between the values of the notes did not occur to him; and just for that reason he preserved considerable flexibility for his metre. Like practically all the music of his time it was written in recurrent metres of like length—that is to say, in bars—but he either did not know this or did not trouble about it. This ignorance or unconcern, however, was above all else to his advantage; for the free fluctuating rhythm made some of his compositions, particularly his setting of prose, extraordinarily effective.

This man cultivated the field of music, once he had entered it, with the same persistence with which he had pursued all of his other aims. He put together his thoughts on theory and published them as a preface to the book of the Turtle Dove. In uninterrupted application he provided with musical settings all the poems in the *Mount of Incense,* some of them with two or three, and set to music all the hymns he had himself ever written, as well as a great many by his pupils. Not satisfied with that, he wrote a number of more extended chorals, with texts taken direct from the Bible. It seemed as though he was about to set to music according to his own receipt the whole of the Scriptures; certainly he was the man to conceive such a plan. If it did not come to that, it was only because he had to devote a large part of his

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time to the performance of what he had done, the training in execution and instruction in singing—and in this field he now achieved the simply extraordinary.

The music of Ephrata, Kretschmar told us, was too unusual, too amazing and arbitrary, to be taken over by the world outside, and hence it had sunk into practical oblivion when the sect of the German Seven-Day Baptists ceased to flourish. But a faint legend had persisted down the years, sufficient in fact to make known how utterly peculiar and moving it had been. The tones coming from the choir had resembled delicate instrumental music and evoked an impression of heavenly mildness and piety in the hearer. The whole had been sung falsetto, and the singers had scarcely opened their mouths or moved their lips—with wonderful acoustic effect. The sound, that is, had thus been thrown up to the rather low ceiling of the hall, and it had seemed as though the notes, unlike any familiar to man, and in any case unlike any known church music, floated down thence and hovered angelically above the heads of the assemblage.

His own father, Kretschmar said, had often heard these sounds as a young man, and in his old age, when he talked to his family about it, his eyes had always filled with tears. He had spent a summer near Snowhill and on a Friday evening, the beginning of the Sabbath, had once ridden over as an onlooker at the house of worship of those pious folk. After that he had gone again and again: every Friday, as the sun set, driven by resistless urge, he had saddled his horse and ridden the three miles to listen. It had been quite indescribable, not to be compared with anything in this world. He had, so the elder Kretschmar had said, sat in English, French, and Italian opera houses; that had been music for the ear, but Beissel's rang deep down into the soul and was nothing more nor less than a foretaste of heaven.

"A great art," so our reporter said in closing, "which, as it were aloof from time and time's great course, could develop a little private history of this kind, and by forgotten side-paths lead to such exceptional beatitudes."

I recall as though it were yesterday how I went home with

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Adrian after this lecture. Although we did not talk much, we were unwilling to separate; and from his uncle's house, whither I accompanied him, he went back with me to the shop, and then I back with him to Parochialstrasse. Though of course we often did that. We both made merry over the man Beissel, this backwoods dictator with his droll thirst for action, and agreed that his music reform reminded us very much of the passage in Terence: "to behave stupidly with reason." But Adrian's attitude to the curious phenomenon differed from mine in what was after all so distinctive a way that it soon occupied me more than the subject itself. I mean that even while he mocked he set store by preserving the right to appreciate: set store by the right, not to say the privilege, of keeping a distance, which includes in itself the possibility of good-natured acceptance, of conditioned agreement, half-admiration, along with the mockery and laughter. Quite generally this claim to ironic remoteness, to an objectivity which surely is paying less honour to the thing than to the freedom of the person, has always seemed to me a sign of uncommon arrogance. In so young a person as Adrian then was, the presumption of this attitude, it must be admitted, is diquieting; it was calculated to cause one concern for the health of his soul. Of course it is also very impressive to a companion with a simpler mental constitution, and since I loved him, I loved his arrogance as well —perhaps I loved him for its sake. Yes, that is how it was: this arrogance was the chief motive of the fearful love which all my life I cherished for him in my heart.

"Leave me alone," said he, as with our hands in our overcoat pockets we went to and fro between our two dwellings, in the wintry mist that wrapped the gas-lamps, "leave me in peace with my old codger, I can do with him. At least he had a sense of order, and even a silly order is better than none at all."

"Surely," I answered him, "you won't defend such a ridiculous and dogmatic arrangement, such childish rationalism as this invention of masters and servants. Imagine how these Beissel hymns must have sounded, in which every accented syllable had to have one note of the chord fall on it!"

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"In any case not sentimental," he responded, "rather rigidly conforming to the law, and that I approve. You can console yourself that there was plenty of play for the fancy you put high above the law, in the free use of the servant notes."

He had to laugh at the word, bent over as he walked, and laughed down upon the wet pavement.

"Funny, it's very funny," he said. "But one thing you will admit. Law, every law, has a chilling effect, and music has so much warmth anyhow, stable warmth, cow warmth, I'd like to say, that she can stand all sorts of regulated cooling off—she has even asked for it."

"There may be some truth in that," I admitted. "But our Beissel isn't after all any very striking example of it. You forget that his rhythm, quite unregulated and abandoned to feeling, at least balanced the rigidity of his melody. And then he invented a singing style for himself—up to the ceiling and then floating down in a seraphic falsetto—it must have been simply ravishing and certainly gave back to music all the bovine warmth that it had previously taken away through the pedantic cooling off."

"Ascetic, Kretschmar would say," he answered, "the ascetic cooling off. In that Father Beissel was very genuine. Music always does penance in advance for her retreat into the sensual. The old Dutchmen made her do the rummest sort of tricks, to the glory of God; and it went harder and harder on her from all one hears, with no sense appeal, excogitated by pure calculation. But then they had these penitential practices sung, delivered over to the sounding breath of the human voice, which is certainly the most stable-warm imaginable thing in the world of sound. . . ."

"You think so?"

"Why not? No unorganic instrumental sound can be compared with it. Abstract it may be, the human voice—the abstract human being, if you like. But that is a kind of abstraction more like that of the naked body—it is after all more a pudendum." I was silent, confounded. My thoughts took me far back in our, in his past.

"There you have it," said he, "your music." I was annoyed at

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the way he put it, it sounded like shoving music off on me, as though it were more my affair than his. "There you have the whole thing, she was always like that. Her strictness, or whatever you like to call the moralism of her form, must stand for an excuse for the ravishments of her actual sounds."

For a moment I felt myself the older, more mature.

"A gift of life like music," I responded, "not to say a gift of God, one ought not to explain by mocking antinomies, which only bear witness to the fullness of her nature. One must love her."

"Do you consider love the strongest emotion?" he asked.

"Do you know a stronger?"

"Yes, interest."

"By which you presumably mean a love from which the animal warmth has been withdrawn."

"Let us agree on the definition!" he laughed. "Good night!"

We had got back to the Leverkühn house, and he opened his door.

[*Translated by H. T. Lowe-Porter*]

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# *Hans Castorp, Small Lord of Counterpositions*

NOTES ON THE PROPHECY OF MANN'S *The Magic Mountain*

*R. P. BLACKMUR*

PROPHECY, LIKE REVOLUTION, is a convulsive or expressive reaction to what has already taken place, whether in the heart, in the actual world, or in a confusion of both. The truth of prophecy is therefore a matter of feeling or inspiration. Prophets rage in religion and politics; in the arts, prophets dramatize the conditions, the feelings, which underlie the rage. The rage of the priest comes about because he has to look ahead to salvation, and that of the politician because he has to look ahead to action, and neither priest nor politician can confront the terrible cost of salvation and action without the protective aid and personal momentum of rage. It is exactly those who must deal directly with the actual world who cannot stand it plain; they have to rely more upon inspiration than upon feeling, or they could not play the prophet's role at all. As George Herbert's poem has Christ ask of Judas:

> *Canst thou find hell about my lips? and misse*
> *Of life, just at the gates of life and blisse?*

Christ was more than a prophet, though he began in prophecy. The artist is always less than a prophet, though one of the high values that may be placed upon his work is that of prophecy. He does not look ahead to salvation or action; rather he dramatizes what is saved or lost, what acts or fails to act. He looks at

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the actual world with only a secondary regard to the terrible cost it exacts in religion and politics. Since he is not compelled to deal directly with that world, he can afford a plain vision of it with only the protection of his form. He relies upon his feeling, and, rather than needing inspiration himself, inspires others. In that inspiration which he creates, not that to which he pretends, is his power of prophecy; he prophesies, by giving form to his feeling of it, what we actually are.

It may be of course that he pretends more. Of all forms of purity the least possible is that a man shall be purely an artist, and that is especially so in an age like our own when we make so much more use of our artists than in ages just past; when, in fact, we pretend that our chief access to reality is in the aesthetic experience of it: that is to say, in experience without responsibility. In such an age the temptation is great for the artist to pretend to the roles in which his audience casts him and to become the culture-hero to whom all things are possible. Perhaps temptation is the wrong word, it may be a contagious disease, of which the artist is only the alternate host, and for which he cannot be held responsible. At any rate, the masterpieces of our time gradually reveal themselves, by the uses to which we are forced to put them, as philosophies, religions, politics—and as the therapies and prophecies of these. This seems to have happened only partly in the sense that the arts have tried to take over the *functions* of these modes of the mind; it has happened much more in the sense that the *experience* of these modes of the mind has become the most pressing part of the subject-matter of the arts. It is not the artist's fault if his audience insists on confusing function and experience by the special arrogance of ignorance and the special vanity of uncommittedness in relation to existing society. The point is, our masterpieces are therapy and prophecy, though they cure nothing present and envisage nothing future. They see and state. And of course, with the formal advantages that go with the arts, they state better than they see.

These considerations ought to apply to almost any devoted reading that we do; it is almost an accident that they are meant

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here to apply to a re-reading of Thomas Mann's *The Magic Mountain.* It is less of an accident because these considerations have become natural *as a result of* the character of that book, together with its sequels. When first read, in the early twenties, one looked at it backwards through the war of 1914; now one looks at it through the second lens of the second war, and the double lens shows it in greater magnitude—so great, it looms the more the more it recedes. And this greater magnitude depends precisely upon that power of prophecy which comes to the artist who dramatises the actual thought—thought in all its senses—of his own time. It is this aspect of *The Magic Mountain* we here examine.

The artist of this kind shows us where we are ahead of ourselves; shows us with what in ourselves we have not yet consciously caught up; shows us, in short, as at the verge of a new shift, a new metamorphosis, of the old omniform which is our mind. It is ourselves—creatures, as we think, of the mid-twentieth century—whom we see in this legend of the *haut-bourgeois* at the climax of the nineteenth century; and we see all the clearer because the mechanisms and predilections are nineteenth-century, and we know how to discount them. It is not the nineteenth-century mind which Mann shows, but what had happened to it.

He shows it, of course, by a special twist; by the idiom of his sensibility; by establishing confines for his vision, outside which he will not look unless the pressure of his sensibility forces him to do so. It is the special twist body and soul take when they do not know where to lie. It is the idiom of an infected sensibility, with a polarity each extreme of which spreads like a stain into the other. The confines he sets for his vision are those of seemly obscurantism, which become, under pressure, the looming confines of the anonymous and the communal. This sequence is not a trick of the mind, it is a mode of operation common enough everywhere the bourgeois mind survives in its old honesty. It is a mind bent on protecting its certainty from its own restlessness and random anarchic promptings: hence the seemly obscurantism becomes unseemly, a demagogy of the soul addressing the soul,

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with a following tendency towards the intemperate, whether in discipline or the breach of discipline. But if the mind is honest in some dark corner it finds it cannot abide on its own practice; its obscurantism becomes indeed unseemly—the protection of something intolerably smothering; and the anonymous and communal, if the pressure of honesty is great enough, break through and set the mind again upon its task of making full assent to the conditions of life with will and choice, with reason and imagination. The story of Hans Castorp is told according to this sequence; but what happens to him is not that he takes up the mind's task, but that his example (the confines in which he is envisaged) shows us, the readers, that the task is there but cannot be taken up, at least not by the kind of man this young engineer stands for in any society he can comprehend. In the actuality of Hans Castorp's predicament is Mann's prophecy: where it works we have a feeling that reality itself is mired in the predicament; where it fails is where the terms of the predicament seem to have mired, not reality, but some human idiopathic horror of it.

That horror of reality—that cultivation of hallucination and fantasy—is what revulses us in the book, and one would like to believe it merely some way-station on a route we need not travel; yet it seems also the positive, ever-tempting escape of suicidal shame. The rate and scope of prophetic power in the arts vary. It may be that we have left behind Mann's vision without, yet, the power of seeing how we have done it or where we are. Mann's vision is gloomy: of an illness so uncopeable that it must somehow be identified with life: the vision of a society composed at every articulate point, of outsiders to that society. The gravity of our disorder seems plain in the fact that we do not think the heroism of the outsider or of the artist unnatural, but in the right course of things. Thus we resort to private force as if it were evangelical; to private absolutisms as if they were magnanimous; to panaceas as if they were specific. This is our own form of the suicidal shame which overcame the world of the magic mountain, and which Hans Castorp, though he could not handle it, could in the end see straight, see through, and reject.

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It was not his disease after all, this shame of the surface convulsion—of the Blue Peter and the Silent Sister—but a deep parallel to it, at the very bottom of the anonymous and the communal.

It is because we can recognize that this is so—so of Hans Castorp; so of us—and because we can use Mann's novel about Hans Castorp as also about us, and therefore as both an instance and a part of the act of recognition—it is because of these things that we may yet escape the stop-short predicament of Hans Castorp. To recognize, to say, is almost everything in the life of the mind. What we say, what we master in the saying, is our creation; and what we create is necessarily what we are. We create, in the end, only what we potentially are. Creation is discovery.

It is in the arts above all that creation is discovery. Every form of the imagination belongs to the heuristic mode of the mind. Better, the heuristic mode belongs to the polymorph of the imagination. Better still—and here is where the adventures of Hans Castorp come in—the use of the imagination prevents us from the seemly obscurantism of thinking we already know what we are, and what others are, by compelling us to find out, in the instance, as an exemplum, and by an act of recognition. That is what we do symbolically in the arts, and that is what, by the symbols they make, the arts do in us. And there is this blessed difference between our relation to the arts and to other modes of the mind: the heuristic imagination is always a renewable act and can never pretend to be complete. America must always be rediscovered, because *this* America was never discovered before, though of course, as we like to reassure ourselves in the dark, it was always there.

It was always there; and, as always, it must be found when not being looked for; it must be a true discovery and yet must seem an accident; otherwise one would reject it in advance as being either incredible or intolerable. *It was always there*, and whatever it was, it was what the settled forms of knowledge either excluded or converted into an institutional mystery. Only the charlatan and the quack got at it as a regular thing. Only in

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dreams did it invade the ordinary nineteenth-century individual. Therefore, if the spirit was quickened or agitated enough—restless enough without force, dubious enough without reference to conviction—one turned to the charlatan and the quack, to the unseemly, the illicit, the shameful, the equivocal, one turned and thought the turning a part of the process of rebirth; for so to turn was to come on the missing half of reality, *to what was always there all along*. One thinks of the French symbolists, of the less energetic hedonists, of art for art, of pure poetry: one thinks of the biography of the artist from 1800 to 1900, of the biography as a kind of standard for subject-matter, and how what was at first appropriate to the biography finally came to be the subject-matter itself: the artist against society. It remained for the artists of the twentieth century to show, on the model of the bohemian artist, the ordinary man against society: man devouring himself in the effort to renew himself, to come on the thing, still alive, *that was always there*.

Mann's *The Magic Mountain* is a legend of how such an ordinary man tapped the resources within him of charlatanry and the equivocal, and came, by the growth of his sensibility, upon what it was that made charlatanry possible and the equivocal inevitable as the mode and the result of experience. Where the artist takes hold of his material expressively and molds as much of it as his form will take, the ordinary man is taken hold of by the material as far as he can be reached. The chief conceptual form of Mann's novel is the relation between Hans Castorp and his experience, and the relation is predicated more or less equally by the simplicity of Hans at an intellectual level and by the equivocalness of the experience at the level at which it is felt. The relation, then, is the stress between the simple and the equivocal; and the progressive epiphanies of that stress constitute the movement of the book. Everything that works towards these epiphanies—and everything that can be *converted* from a less to a more available phase—adds value to the conceptual form. Everything that works against—everything that hides or obviates —these epiphanies detracts from the value. Everything merely

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intellectual, for example, must either be converted into, or deeply allied with, the sensibility. Hans must never lose his naivety, no matter how high a value is assigned to it. On the other hand, as the experience represented takes up more and more of the intellectual burden of the modern mind, it must always be brought back to that equivocal status in which it had appeared in the first place in the mind's history.

This is, of course, one way of getting at the problem of remaking culture, and it is interesting to note that society should have gotten into such a situation that a novelist would tackle the job from a point of view so near the amorphous, so anxious for metamorphosis, certain only of the polymorphic: as if culture were again embryonic, but with a prospect, not of original birth in sin or imperfection, but of rebirth in disease and shame. As readers, we need keep the problem of remaking culture only in the background, precisely as Mann may have kept it only for future consideration. The conceptual form of the stress between the simple and the equivocal, especially when exhibited in terms of a pattern of rebirth, is an extraordinarily powerful instrument with which to compose a novel. As a form it cannot help putting into relation what it takes hold of, and it has the great advantage that it works as well no matter in which direction the stress is set up. In Mann's story of Joseph, it is the hero himself who is equivocal, and his experience one simple blow after another. In the story of Hans Castorp the direction is opposite. But in both stories the conceptual form is identical and bears the fullest possible burdens of the experience of culture as it actually is: what *occupies* the relation between the hero and his world.

The weight of culture and its reformation is imponderable and ever-pressing. Let us take it here only as a novelist's subject. Let us see how Mann went about making his subject malleable, keeping it plastic, letting happen to it what must, under the force of his strict conceptual form. It is the form—such is the seriousness of the novelist—that stands for the weight of the culture, stands for it with a kind of ascetic abandon. The novelist plays it for all it is worth, but binds himself not to exceed that worth.

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Therefore he takes precautions. He makes his hero not only simple but ordinary, and he makes the experience of his hero not only equivocal but also an extension of ordinary experience —the little expected, but always astonishing and puzzling extension from a particular health to its corresponding disease. The words are all familiar, but the accents come in new places; there is either more emptiness or more thickness between the syllables. The more one knows what is going on, the more one is disconcerted; precisely because it is the familiar that has been converted into the strange, and never—here is where the asceticism comes in —the strange that has become familiar.

The sequence in which Mann leads his readers to receive these impressions, constitutes another precaution. Hans is felt as ordinary before he is discovered as simple, but the experience is emphasized as equivocal before it is discovered as familiar. Only the achieved simplicity can cope with the familiar. Had Mann reversed his sequence—had he led from the simple to the ordinary, the familiar to the equivocal—the relation between them would have existed, but only at a minimum stress, like a ghost at high noon, and been immediate prey to the nearest intellectual formularization. That is why, as a further precaution, Hans does not come to us with much useable intellectual furniture; the lack of it not only prevents him from substituting formula for response, it also hinders the reader from doing so. It is the sensibility stands between, for Hans, and for ourselves.

There are more precautions, but we do not need to examine them. Let us touch rather on some of the forces Mann risks letting loose on Hans without precaution just to see what they will do. As Mann is far from an economical writer there are a great many of these forces that cluster about Hans; if he is not furnished with ideas he is furnished with a multiplicity of attributes, and the meaning of many of them is not fixed but floating. Thinking of all these attributes together, one concludes that Hans is representative but not himself the thing—perhaps not even a part of the thing—he represents, though touched by it. He is bourgeois, but he is haut-bourgeois, that is to say, the

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lever but not the substance of the characteristic phase human power took in the nineteenth century. He is the conservator of something no longer there to conserve; rather like the eighteenth-century gentleman in nineteenth-century England or America. He belongs to that aristocracy which, unless it has individual talent or predatory ability, is without function beyond the preservation of ritual against a better time. Mann puts it that he is mediocre, but in an honourable sense. He is a man disinclined to active life or any function of it. Trained as an engineer, he can feel no calling in it, and cannot open his great textbook on steamships. But he puts a good face on it; he will appear active, and will live with what good face can go without a good heart. He is something of an artist, but only in the sentimental sense where talent is not an issue; he neither takes nor gives authority in his relations to the arts, but bemuses them to his own less than conscious purposes. He takes care about eating and drinking and smoking his Maria Mancinis, about his clothes and all creature-comforts, and about music of the kind that heightens or obviates creature-comforts. He has even a kind of taste in all the arts that protect and occupy his indolent repose. In short, he is representative rather than conscious of the weaknesses of the age he feels so little a part of. He is his own foil; he shows off clearest against himself. Yet in some sense he could see that there was no positive reason why he should exert himself; he seemed to know that incentive and motive must come from outside—and the outside gave no sign. Hence, in Mann's view, he is not quite mediocre. He is therefore a possible victim of a spiritual and physical palsy of doubt and discontent in a world which gave no answer to ultimate questions. The ritual of his being craved a little the substance of conviction. He could not, like the extraordinary man, conquer an alien world by "moral remoteness and single-mindedness" or "exceptionally robust vitality." But in his mediocrity, he might, under the right circumstances, find out what things are; and in that possibility lies his honour. We see at once that he is one of those young men who are to be occupied with a search without

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entirely knowing that he has undertaken it. It will be more as if the search had undertaken him. He will respond more with his sensibility than his mind, yet his mind will shift with his sensibility, a kind of permanent reserve accommodation ready at no matter what destination. But it is the sensibility, not the mind, we see shift as he moves from the role of life's delicate child, who can practice only seemly obscurantism, to the role his mistress assigns him of *joli bourgeois à la petite tache humide,* in which he finds he can sink into obscurity itself, thence to his third role, where he re-emerges as life's delicate child but at an infinitely higher rate of value.

When he comes, this pretty bourgeois, to the magic mountain, it is partly to visit a sick cousin, and partly to give himself a change of air, a vacation, an interlude, before taking up the serious business of life. Thus the trip combines duty with license; it is a legitimate extravagance of spirit—a confession that life rests on something other than its settled forms, an avowal that there must be an occasional respite from virtue to make it regularly tolerable. The bourgeois, by inventing the idea of vacations, made only one in the long series of devices men have made to maintain themselves in an intolerable society; and his further step is to have made the vacations themselves intolerable. Hans Castorp's experience on the magic mountain follows the pattern of vacations, with the difference that it lasted longer than expected and discovered new modes of the intolerable.

The difference is because he takes his vacation among men and women of all races of Europe, all young, all in the service of death, and all fevered. The youth counts more than the death, and the fever counts more than either. Fever is that shifting standard by which things are never right. In fever, though the old things happen, they do not happen at the same rate, in the same relation, nor with the same result. In fever even the most ordinary things are equivocal. The magic mountain is inhabited by the youth of Europe at fever-pitch, and serves as a kind of excess paradigm —a prophecy in darkness——for William James' speculation that if you raised the body temperature a degree you would change

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the human race. The fever is the sickness that accompanies the change—the *process* of a shift in phase; when the fever goes, a stable phase will have been reached, the phase either of a new thing or of death, there is no telling which. Fever alters, fever cleans, and it burns up what it cleans; fever is like spirit in Santayana's phrase, it chills the flesh and is itself on fire.

At first, so to speak, Hans is feverish but does not have fever. He has feelings of extravagant joy, of reckless sweetness; he sees the advantages of shame over honor, and he has, rather feverishly, the characteristic need of the bourgeois for the illicit when the law has gone (as, up here, it has gone) bad: the illicit is a restorative and it shows as the blessedness of the seductive. The push for the unseemly replaces the practice of seemly obscurantism. When he identifies his interest in Clavdia Chauchat with an unseemly boyhood experience his interest turns to infatuation with her reckless flabbiness and diseased flesh, and he produces, as the act of communion, a genuine fever in himself. Thereat, the two doctors make him one of them; the chief doctor assures him he has a talent for illness, and the other—that lover of disease to whom disease is love—shakes him warmly by the hand. It is a conquest.

It all goes back to that special characterization of Hans as mediocre: a product of an age he is discontented with; without moral remoteness or unusual vigor; without effective education either of past ages or of his own; a lover of death (that is of a stability not vital) and of his own ease. What should he want more than to prolong a holiday which has trapped him with both its actuality and its ceremony: compared to which his previous life and its ceremonies were only laid on. Now that he had the fever he had the sense of reality. Yet this mountain only showed the life below with the palsy to which it was by nature prone, and with its shame a little nearer the surface. Here everything was infected with itself. Ideals, intents, motives which had become pretenses of themselves were the first to suffer change to their true phase. Disorder, confusion, disease had become the immediate order of nature.

But if the story of how Hans developed a fever goes back to

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his mediocrity, it also goes forward—or inward—to something else. If the disease is seen straight for what it must be—Hans' moist spot *cannot* be tubercular, as his soul *cannot* be bourgeois—if his novitiate is truly passed through, it will be because there is a magnetism under the magic of the mountain, some attractive or propulsive force, something which when recognized as well as felt will seem a principle of order, clarity, health. Whatever it is, it will be whatever has made all this disturbance take place by the mere rise of a degree of temperature. At the moment when Hans has affirmed the rise—a little over a quarter of the way through the book—the disturbance is convulsive, a war of the equivocal which has not yet forced upon Hans' mediocrity the increment of simplicity but which has rather only immersed him in the half-awareness of elated abandonment. Nothing has moved towards clarity, let alone order and health; the magnetism is still magic, the force still seductiveness, the principle still contradiction. In Joachim Ziemssen, Hans' sick cousin, there is one remnant of the old world, the soldier's avowal of glory in death, but this Hans does not share. In Behrens, the medical director, there is the uncertainty and the humor of the question whether the disease comes to the mountain or the mountain makes the disease. In Krokowski, the psychiatrist, there is half a charlatan, but the other half is force, of darkness in light: of disease as what shines in the light. In Settembrini, the humanist, there is half-pretence and wayward emotion in the masquerade of order—the organ-grinder's order in the shape of a dancing monkey—but the other half is the force of aspiring rational will. In Madame Chauchat there is a tainted place—the taint of a cat always half in heat—but she is also what is tainted, or at least the sentiment of it: the vitality of the other thing, possibly shameful but in essence the very thing Settembrini would dignify if he had in reality the power he strove so feverishly to represent. To all these, Hans abandons himself with triumphant laughter and dreadful anticipation, and builds a double infatuation: with Clavdia Chauchat—sex as disease; and with death—life as a sickness, an infection, of matter; each in its most voluptuary form. That is what hap-

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pens to the bourgeois who has conjured, or found, in himself, and thereby in his world, a rise of a degree or two of temperature: a passion for the moribund.

Only scorn—that earliest form of criticism—can momentarily pull him back. When Madame Chauchat scorns his hysterical advances, his temperature drops to normal; when she accepts him in manner it rises; when she accepts him in full—on carnival night when the Thou holds sway—he goes into delirious rhapsody of the shameless and the sacred. But it is only scorn of sex and death that has this reactive power. The scorn of Settembrini the humanist, the furious rebel of reason, only drives him on, a kind of unconscious devil's advocacy of further abandonment. Hans may be, as Settembrini calls him, life's delicate child; he is also more European than Settembrini thinks. Europe is not all Mediterranean, neither all reason nor all latinity. Nor was latin reason ever enough. It had always to be founded on something not itself, and commonly discovered that by itself it made life unbearable. The world was not yet ready for the atheism of reason, no more for Settembrini than for Hans; both served forces of an occult character, and Hans knew this better than Settembrini, for he had little protection—only the power of engorgement—against the primitive things which continually assaulted him. On the other hand he did not know enough to use Settembrini in fullness—for his dream of history and the noble lies by which the fragments of life are put together; he knew only enough to quote him and misuse him—which is what the bourgeois has chiefly done with the classical tradition. Settembrini was right, with the rightness of tragic insight that takes up the impossible role of evangelist and teacher; Hans Castorp was life's delicate child, and it was up to him to teach Hans the mature form of the European tradition: not what brought it to life but what permitted it to survive, what kept it alive, plastic, possible, plausible, prophetic.

But just as Settembrini did not have the effective scorn of Clavdia Chauchat, so he did not himself represent the whole of what he wished to teach; there was not enough in him to make a true simple. He needed the help of his rhetorical enemy the

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absolute will. This we get at once in the sickened, corrosively ugly, puny, and fashionably dressed figure of the jewish jesuit Naphta. The two argue, and in a peculiar sense complete each other, by confusing themselves. Hans, listening, takes up the attitude in which—in this Circe's palace—he had drawn pigs, and decides that Naphta is not a true jesuit but a *joli jésuite* with a *petite tache humide.* Time passes, Joachim goes, Hans, alone, stays forever, and continues listening to argument after argument between the rational humanist position and the super-rational absolutist position. The one sees life philanthropically, the other sees life as a disease; they push into each other, and bind, like the dovetail joints of a box, until their friction is maximum. It makes little difference where the arguments take off, the result is the same. The crucial argument, for example, starts over capital punishment, and ends up with the will behaving like reason, and reason asserting itself wilfully. The argument has reached the merging point where nobody knows who is devout and who free-thinking. Mann's imagination is right. Surely the rational humanist is devout. Surely the jesuit who will sacrifice everything to blessedness is a free-thinker. Surely he who would build a tolerable universe is devout and praises God. Surely he who insists on an intolerable universe at any cost is a free-thinker and blasphemes God with the degraded remnants of his faith.

It is a real question—the kind that forces such ordinary souls as Hans to simplicity as the only response to the equivocal—the question which is the greater temptation: to insist exclusively on that which is possible to know, or to insist wholly on the force of that which it is impossible to know. Each temptation leads to reckless omnicompetence and disaster; which is why each not only consents to, but invites the intervention of the terror. Perhaps the temptation *is* the invocation of terror, the one in the form of the eagle treading the dove, the other in the form of invoking the devil as incentive to God; the one by Revolution, the other by Inquisition. Here is the terrible dilemma, in Eliot's phrase, of the incredible public world and the intolerable private world: the dilemma of the impossible choice between doing good even though

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evil come, and doing deliberate evil in the hope that after the destruction good may have a chance to supervene. Either choice is heresy, one the heresy that goodness leads to blessedness, the other the heresy that good may be force.

Mann did not invent this dilemma. To the ordinary mind everywhere, but especially to the mediocre mind of the disinherited bourgeois who has any sense of simplicity at all, it is the central form of the struggle between the tolerable world and the intolerable world as ideals for action. It is the struggle between the fool of virtue and the ascetic libertine. The pity is that there is no escaping action, and the curse is that action cannot escape the infection of thought. In this argument which sprang from a difference about capital punishment, we see how thought becomes action and how action takes resource in thought. The more otherworldly the source of power, the more the power seems to withdraw itself, the more the devil is uncovered and the more the power takes the all-touching, all-penetrating form of the terror. Total security would be total terror: the savage absolutism of the advantage of mankind seen in kingdom come, or the savage absolutism of rational truth as moral law: absolute spirit or absolute man.

Hans makes his spiritual exercises listening to all this. He has not mind enough to know how *little* mind is in Settembrini's reason or how *much* there is in Naphta's absolutism; how little the one, how much the other created in his own image. Naturally, therefore, when he tries to choose between the "all-consuming all-equalizing chaos, that ascetic-libertine state" and "the 'critical subjective' where empty bombast and a bourgeois strictness of morals contradicted each other," he tends towards Naphta's "morally chaotic All." All Clavdia Chauchat represented: abandon, adventure, sin, shame, elation: all this tended that way. Hans understood very well the *petite tache humide* of extreme submission and even better the palsy in his neck and chin. Thus he took his spiritual exercises. Life's delicate child stretched his sensibility in terms of the Operationes Spirituales of the diseased Jesuit.

But he is not done stretching, and each further stretch is either

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in parallel or developmental response to this spiritual exercise. Here we will limit ourselves to the dream in the snow and the adventure of Peeperkorn, for in these two we have at the maximum the relation between the simple and the equivocal which is the conceptual form of the book, and have also the maximum reach of this novel as prophecy, both in relation to the polarity of Settembrini and Naphta. The chapter called Snow is a dream —part waking, part sleeping, part hallucinated, and part reawakened—in five parts. The first is Hans' innocent impulse to try the lion's maw, the sea's depth, the desert place, the winter wildness of the snow: by submitting consciously to nature he might find out the rank and stature of *Homo Dei.* In the second part, his heart struggles alone in the icy void, and he escapes his impulse by finding himself back at the hayhut where he had started, deliberately lost. In the third part, as he forces himself to wander on, ethics and religion, the will of the mind and the narcosis of the body, struggle to possess him. So begins the danger state in which abasement is the right action: he thinks of death in formal splendor, of Naphta's knout of discipline, and—while there intrudes a hallucination of Settembrini with a horn and a handorgan—of Clavdia Chauchat. Hands pull him to lie down in the snow. But he stands—there must be no coying with the bride of the storm—letting only his head droop. At once he is below, on the plains, their fragrant abundance, birdsong and rainbows, the climate of the living. Here, with the unbearable purity of an Italian tenor's voice, begins the fourth part of the dream. Spread before him is the pastoral of Mediterranean metempsychosis, full of sweetness and light and ceremony and maternity. Hans feels an unscrupulous outsider till he follows the gaze of a lovely boy within a temple. There two hags dismember and devour a child—life's delicate child—and he wakes, wrapped in the cold whispered brawling of their curse upon him, lying in the snow. The fresh strength of withdrawal from fatal sleep gives him, in the fifth part, the power of waking vision. He knows that it has been the great soul dreaming in him the anonymous and communal dream of human hope and its cost.

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In this dream is the paradigm for Hans' conversion; it is also the point where Mann pushed his prophecy beyond the discovery of the actual into the revelation (that is, the pushed vision) of the real; and it should be noted that both for paradigm and prophecy Mann sticks to the conceptual form of the stress between the simple and the equivocal. In his dream Hans reaches that simplicity which absorbs the equivocal. It is, for him, the great man's dream, and while it still presses on his mind he not only knows the task of the mind but feels, in his healthy exhilaration, potent to perform his part in it. It is as if the fever had dropped and the future had *come again* upon the anterior state of what it always was. For the moment Hans is both morally remote and exceptionally robust, and he has that sense of conclusion that goes with necessary action. He has known reason and recklessness, all of man—flesh, blood, disease, death—and knows the name for all: the human being, the delicate child of life. He knows that behind enlightened man lies the blood sacrifice; and he knows that this is better than either the pennypipe of reason or the *guazzobuglio* of God and the Devil. He sees that if man can keep a little clear in the head and keep pious in the heart, then disease, health, spirit, nature are not themselves problems. "The recklessness of death is in life, it would not be life without it—and in the centre is the position of the *Homo Dei,* between recklessness and reason, as his state is between mystic community and windy individualism. . . . Man is the lord of counterpositions, they can only be through him, and thus he is more aristocratic than they. More so than death, too aristocratic for death—that is the freedom of the mind. More aristocratic than life, too aristocratic for life, and that is the piety of the heart." So for the access of moral remoteness. With the new exceptionally robust vitality he sees one more thing: that love and death do not couple, but that love is opposed to death. "From love and sweetness alone come form and civilization—but always in recognition of blood sacrifice. . . . I will keep faith with death in my heart, yet well remember that faith with death and the dead is evil, is hostile to humankind, so soon as we give it power over thought and action. *For the sake of goodness*

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*and love, man shall let death have no sovereignty over his thoughts.*"

Hans thinks that he will know all this forever. But this great man's dream cannot last in this middling young man, at least not as a force, only as a change in the beat of his heart, and as the sense of a mystery lost, held as a memory of rapture and as an incentive to gallantry. Though the dream had faded and the thought was no longer clear after dinner that night, it was with that memory and that incentive (that remoteness and that vitality) that he could see his dead cousin's face smile in its warrior's beard and could meet in full faith the extra-human vitality (without remoteness) of Mynheer Peeperkorn. Before both this life in death and this supererogation of life, Hans was himself a little lord of great counterpositions, owing and giving allegiance that shifted, but always the allegiance of self.

Almost he loses that allegiance when he is confronted with Peeperkorn. Peeperkorn wears a clerical waistcoat and checkered tails; he is Naphta and Settembrini together, without the emphasis of either, and with a tremendous blurred personality lodged in gin, wine, coffee extra-strong; in a voice of high moment but without matter or sequence but with a speaking gesture that made good what he did not say. He might be the lord of counterpositions, but he is more likely a torrent, the thing in man like a mountain, a waterfall, or the sea. Nobody like Peeperkorn can last very long in our lives nor can such men often last out their own lives. The pitch is too hard to keep and we are mostly unequal to the demanded effort of its example. Yet it is the pitch of life as force, force as fever—the pitch of the life force—of the going-on-ness without some pressure of which, some shifting stage of which, we should all stop; but it is a force converted too far beyond the human phase—even though it is what humans are made of. So converted, it is destructive force; in serving it we are destroyed by it if we do not protect ourselves from it, just as Peeperkorn, when love and alcohol fail him, destroys himself. Surely that is what is meant when his death is called abdication: he is the king of all those parts of ourselves we cannot be and live. Yet, as we are human, we yearn to serve his force even more than we dread

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his apparition. We seek what we must shun, as Melville said of Shakespeare; and we organize what we shun in order to go on seeking it. In armies we organize it as discipline and in religion as ritual, though we know that the act of war is beyond any discipline and that the act of religion is beyond any ritual. In the lesser creations of ordinary life we think we purge such apparitions, by toadying, by indifference, by ridicule, by thought—but if we stop thinking we feel the force within us.

That is what happened to Hans when confronted with Mynher Peeperkorn. When he stops toadying and stops thinking he feels Mynheer Peeperkorn within him. That Clavdia Chauchat has returned to the mountain as Peeperkorn's mistress—attached to him because of his feeling for her and the anguish of that feeling—does nothing to bring about Hans' discovery of full feeling, but her presence makes a true contrast to that discovery. As she had become Thou to him on the night of the carnival of fever, so she is no longer so after the moment in the new carnival of feeling when Peeperkorn and Hans become—precisely in their struggle over her—blood brothers, become Thou to each other, and the reign of Thou holds full sway. Hans learns that Peeperkorn is human too; more human than anybody: the all-too-human we cannot be is human too: human on the grand scale, that scale which has the long perspective we call tragic when we do not call it love, but which taken out of scale, taken close, is holocaust. But here are Peeperkorn's own words, when he reprehends Hans for glibness over their relations to Clavdia. They are drinking wine by twilight, the old man abed, Hans at his side. "Feeling, you understand, is the masculine force that rouses life. Life slumbers. It needs to be roused, to be awakened to a drunken marriage with divine feeling. For feeling, young man, is godlike. Man is godlike, in that he feels. He is the feeling of God. God created him in order to feel through him. Man is nothing but the organ through which God consummates his marriage with roused and intoxicated life. If man fails in feeling, it is the surrender of his masculinity, a cosmic catastrophe, an irreconcilable horror." It is on this basis that the Thou holds

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sway between them. Yet, as they separate in the dark, Hans imagines Settembrini coming in suddenly and turning on the light, to let reason and convention reign. In the dark, alone, feeling becomes that wholly human, wholly intolerable creation: that thing out of the womb we call hysteria. Perhaps that is why, in the next chapter, after raising his voice, half man of sorrows and half sybaritic rogue, to harangue the waterfall ("that long catastrophe of foam and fury") he kills himself that night. It is not possible to convert nature into one's own hysteria, and if you try life becomes intolerable.

No matter. Such a push of hysteria is possible of actual experience at any time—it is the terrible temptation in the exercise of human powers of creation, and to feel it is to come on the quick of our disease, our ultimate giddiness. After his exposure to this temptation, Hans falls successively under the spells of the Great God Dumps, Music as the means of self-re-creation, Traffic with the questionable morass of the subhuman or unclean traffic with one's own nature, the General Contagion of rancor and hysteria ending in Naphta's suicide in the duel where Settembrini fires in the air, and lastly the spell of the coming war and Settembrini's death. Then Hans goes down into battle and vanishes. Living or dead, says Mann, his prospects are poor. Yet he had known in the Spirit what in the flesh he could scarcely have done: in moments—out of death and the rebellion of the flesh—a dream of love: that is to say the reign of Thou over all the counterpositions of the human spirit. Mann addresses Hans, in closing, with the Thou of love and allegiance. Hans was indeed a small Lord.

Thinking of all this we see that Mann is indeed the innerly twinned child of Dostoevsky and Nietzsche. He springs from the human depths and also from those depths which are all-too-human. He understands the Apollonian and the Dionysiac, also the Inquisitor and the Galloping Troika (Dostoevsky's image of Russia, an image which Clavdia Chauchat had on her cigarette case): four precarious roles all resting on a surface which convulses, through the anonymous and communal, with its own

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appropriate terror, its underlying moral chaos and orgiastic freedom. He knows that terror intervenes because we forget it is there, a part of ourselves, into which we slip with dismay; but he knows too, that we can recast ourselves, if we will, if we remember and do not deny what lies under us, without the intervention of terror. But since it is not done, since terror does come, it is his business to prophesy what ought to have been remembered. He shows us therefore upon what violence, and at what extremities, the Thou comes to hold sway: by carnival, within the presence of personality, at death, and at war: in each case in response to a break-through.

In the simple, but mutually reversed, dualism of Naphta and Settembrini—that is, in the stress of Hans' relations to it—it is not so much their confusion that is shown, as that the conditions they have to meet are shown breaking through. The part of the mind that makes choice has still the old choice to make: namely, choice of the method of protection and control. The moist spots in each are in their attempts to replace the conditions of existence with themselves. The difference between them is that where Settembrini seems to ignore the abyss of feeling within him, Naphta, seeming to know it, does no more than create a false abyss of his own. In the structures of the mind there can be no sharper difference. Yet the current temptation will always be to take Naphta's invention of the private abyss as a real solution, needing no transformation, never seeing how relatively easy it is to make up for Settembrini's deliberate failure of vision as a mere oversight.

As a clarifying example, consider how Naphta could do nothing with Clavdia Chauchat, no matter how far you pushed him; yet Settembrini could, with but the restoration of his original insights (those in Hans' dream), do anything with her: her abyss is the real one: she is the force of it, as she tells Hans, which is why Hans changes his Thou from her to Peeperkorn. Both rest upon Clavdia as the sacred condition of life. As it is, both Peeperkorn and Hans feel Settembrini's prejudice against Clavdia somehow justified, as in her own way Clavdia does too. He is not

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"hu-man," she says, but she knows he understands the human, in her as well as elsewhere. It is Settembrini alone among all these diseased and defective figures who comes to his end as a part of human life, not by disappearance or self-destruction; and it is only by thinking of Settembrini that we understand the tragic failure of Peeperkorn's hysteria of the human: to remake the conditions of life in his own image. It is only Settembrini who suggests that man can still be lord of counterpositions.

What are they—these counterpositions? Do we not come at them in this novel which hints at reality by showing the actuality of all those conditions of life which it is the constant task of our waking moments to accommodate, expiate, and refresh? They are the golden eagle overhead, the anonymous and communal within ourselves. They are the actual of what one already knows, the reality that was always there.

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## *Dry Places*

No cars go by
Where dogs are barking at the desert.
Yet it is not twenty years since many lamps
Shed their juices in this one time town
And stores grew big lights, like oranges and pears.

Now not one lame miner
Sits on the rotten verandah,
Works in the irons where
Judas' shadow dwells.
Yet I could hew a city
From the side of their hill.

Oh deep stone covert where the dusk
Is full of lighted beasts
And the mad stars preach wars without end:
Whose bushes and grasses live without water,

There the skinny father of hate rolls in his dust
And if the wind should shift one leaf
The dead jump up and bark for their ghosts:
Their dry bones want our penniless souls.

Bones, go back to your baskets.
Get your fingers out of my clean skin.
Rest in your rainless death until your own souls
Come back in the appointed way and sort you out from your remains.

We who are still alive will wring a few green blades
From the floor of this valley
Though ploughs abhor your metal and your clay.

Nevertheless, rather than starve with you
In rocks without oasis,

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Tomorrow we will get up and work your loam
Until some prayer or some lean sentence
Bleeds like the quickest root they ever cut.

For we cannot forget the legend of the world's childhood
Or the track to the dogwood valley
And Adam our Father's old grass farm
Wherein they gave the animals names
And knew Christ was promised first without scars
When all God's larks called out to Him
In their wild orchard.

—THOMAS MERTON

## *Ophelia*

Rain brims your stone roof like the surface of a river,
Spills to no other element, descends its layered own;
Sunless, the underwater foliage waves outside your room
In which you sit, in the dry center of a bubble.

O there the salmon rhododendron floats, the garden stair
Where once he turned and looked at you. His face was water,
Where now is only grass, the green heart of the river
Swelling with rain against your glass room, narrowing its air.

This is the space before your herb-song like a portent
Garlands your mouth that soon will fill with weeds. Your madness waits.
O in its slit-eyed narrowing the dry room lights
With lightning. Look, the door is still unbarred! It opens

To hall and massive stair, to the dead old man, to love
No more than a need for a becoming, your own need beloved.
Green blackness rushes, floods your selfness, as the fertile river
Marries your spirit, taking a clothes-heap when at last you dive.

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## *Seasonal Poem*

If the world were to end, these lilies would
Blow their four trumpets at earth's fabled corners,
While men fell trembling and the ancient dead
Rose, and majesty dazzled saints and mourners.

So tall they stand in the majolica urn,
Their leaves like ladder-rungs would climb to heaven,
But halfway there, or less, the green stems turn
Sharp right and left, their four corollas even.

Each flares green-white and at the rim curls back
Only enough to let the filaments
Show in a circlet their burnt-orange wicks
Set close around the pistil's eminence.

At the first dust of pollen falling, doom
Like a tremor sounds, but it is only thunder
Breaking on a far hill, and still the summer
Is motionless and heavy in the room,

And mute as the lilies shading the cool urn
Where sculptured lilies in enameling
Raise their relentless omen like a tomb's
Legend of the beauty of an ancient king.

—ELDA TANASSO

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# *The Solitary*

From the wild cage of your arms I fled
I found the beaches and the auburn grass;
the trefoiled eel, the echo-loving owl
have loved and blessed me in this place.

At night I miss you; the charred log
leaves an intrinsic memory of your ways
and there are walls accomplice to your name
and animals who duplicate your grace.

This loneliness is like a natural down
developed on a fruit and close to me,
nearer than any feeling not my own,
a self-concern, a massive key

that brought me to the land of autumn-sands
where crickets sing enamored of the weed
and elegant dark mussels flex their scales
in sudden inlets washed with rose and jade. . . .

Now storms have rent the graphline of this coast
sinking old camp sites in the certain wave,
with a green fierceness drowning scarps of fir
and wrecking all the roads that lead away.

—HOWARD GRIFFIN

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# *Longinus*

*ALLEN TATE*

TO BEGIN AN ESSAY with a silent apology to the subject is commendable, but one should not expect the reader to be interested in it. I allude to the ignorance in which I had underestimated Longinus, before I reread him after twenty years, because I am convinced that it is typical. Who reads Longinus? I do not mean to say literally that he is not read. There is an excellent recent study by Mr. Elder Olson; there are the fine books by Mr. T. R. Henn and Mr. Samuel H. Monk,* that persons of the critical interest should know something about, and doubtless do. Until these books appeared, there had been no serious consideration of Longinus since Saintsbury's *A History of Criticism* (1900). In some twenty-five years of looking at criticism in the United States and England I have not seen a reference to the Περὶ ὕψους, with the exception already noticed, which is of more than historical interest. One might, with misplaced antiquarian zeal, find the name, if not much more, of Aristotle in the pages of a fashionable journal like *Horizon;* one would have to go to the learned journals, which few critics see, to find even the name of Longinus. Until Mr. Henn and Mr. Monk reminded us of him, he had been dropped out of active criticism since the end of the eighteenth century. I should like to believe that these excellent scholars have brought about a Longinian revival. Mr. Herbert Read informs me that Coleridge in *Table Talk* spoke of him as "no very profound critic." It must seem to us today that Coleridge buried him in that remark. I am not confident that

*_Longinus and English Criticism_, by T. R. Henn (Cambridge, 1934); and _The Sublime: A Study of Critical Theories in XVIII-Century England_, by Samuel H. Monk (New York, 1935).

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I shall succeed where Mr. Monk and Mr. Henn failed (if they did fail), that what I am about to say will exhume Longinus.

## I

This is not the occasion to establish a correct English title for Περὶ ὕψους. (In the New Testament ὕψος means not the physical heavens [οὐρανός] but something like "on high.") To my mind the idea of height or elevation contained in the title, *Of the Height of Eloquence,* which was given to the work by the first English translator, John Hall, in 1652, is more exact than *On the Sublime,* which carries with it the accretions of Boileau and the English eighteenth century, and the different meanings contributed later by Burke and Kant, which are far removed from anything that I have been able to find in this third (or is it first?) century treatise. So far from Kant's is Longinus' conception of "sublimity" that one pauses at the marvelous semantic history of the term. In Chapter IX Longinus quotes a passage from the *Iliad* Book XX, about the war of the gods, and comments: "Yet these things terrible as they are, if they are not taken as an allegory are altogether blasphemous and destructive of what is seemly." To allegorize infinite magnitude, quantity beyond the range of the eye, is to reduce it to the scale of what Kant called the Beautiful as distinguished from the Sublime. The "sublimity" of the passage, in the Kantian sense, Longinus could not accept. These shifts of meaning are beyond the scope of my interest and my competence. Three other brief and confusing parallels will fix in our minds the difficulties of Longinus' title. His insight, perhaps unique in antiquity, which is contained in the distinction between the "persuasion" of oratory and the "transport" of what, for want of a better phrase, one may call the literary effect, reappears in this century as neo-symbolism and surrealism. Some twenty years ago the Abbé Bremond decided that transport meant religious mysticism, and wrote a book called *La Poésie*

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*Pure*. In England about thirty years ago Arthur Machen, of whom few people of the generations younger than mine have heard, the author of *The Hill of Dreams* and other novels after Huysmans, wrote a small critical book called *Hieroglyphics*. Machen proposed to discern the real thing in literature with a test that he called "ecstasy," but what made Machen ecstatic left many persons cold. At any rate the Greek word in Longinus that we translate as "transport" is ἔκστασις. Had Boileau not stuffed Longinus with Neo-classical "authority," would he have been discovered by the French and English romantics, to whom he could have spoken from another if equally wrong direction? This topic may be dropped with the observation that literary history is no more orderly than any other history.

I shall, then, in the following remarks, think of the two key terms in Longinus, ὕψος and ἔκστασις, as respectively Elevation of Language and Transport; but I cannot expect to disentangle them from each other. They contain, in their inter-relations, a version of a persistent ambiguity of critical reference which appeared with Aristotle, had vigorous life up to Coleridge (with whom it comes back disguised); and which now eggs on the edifying controversy of the contemporary English and American critics: Ransom, Cleanth Brooks, Read, Leavis, Richards, Blackmur, and Winters. Is Elevation an objective quality of the literary work? Is Transport its subjective reference denoting the emotions of the reader—or the "hearer," as Longinus calls him—as he receives the impact of Elevation? Does either term, Elevation or Transport, point to anything sufficiently objective to be isolated for critical discussion?

This is not the moment to answer that question, if I were competent to answer it. Our first duty is to find out how Longinus asks it. After defining Elevation tautologically, in Chapter I, as "a kind of supreme excellence of discourse" (ἐξοχή τις λόγων ἐστὶ τὰ ὕψη), he describes its effect:

> *For what is out of the common,* affects the hearer not to persuade but to entrance (οὐ γὰρ εἰς πειθὼ τοὺς ἀκροωμένους ἀλλ' εἰς ἔκστασιν ἄγει τὰ ὑπερφυᾶ). It moves to wonder and surprise, and always wins

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> against what is merely delightful or persuasive. It is not enough in one or two passages of a work to exhibit invention schooled by experience, nor again the fine order and distribution of its parts, nor even these qualities displayed throughout. Rather, I suggest, does the sublime, fitly expressed, pierce everything like a flash of lightning. . . .*

*Not to persuade, but to entrance, like a flash of lightning.* In these words Longinus breaks with the rhetoricians who had dominated ancient criticism since Aristotle, four to six hundred years before him, and who continued to dominate it until the seventeenth century. Neither Longinus nor Dante, in *De Vulgari Eloquentia,* had any influence on critical theory after them, until the time of Boileau, when Longinus was used to justify rules that he had never made; Dante's criticism has languished in the department of biography; at best, in the history of criticism, as a document of the time.

## II

Chapter II opens with the question: "We must first discuss whether there is an art of the sublime." In the Greek the phrase is ὕψους τις ἢ βάθους τέχνη—"an art of height or of depth"; but the word we should attend is τέχνη, "art," which the Greeks used for any teachable skill, from metal-working to music and medicine. They applied the term to all the skills of making for which an objective rationale could be devised. Longinus explains the views of Caecilius, the opponent of uncertain identity whom the Περὶ Ὕψους was written to refute, who believed that elevation of language came through nature alone, that the great writer, born great, needs nothing but his birth. In this controversy of lively acrimony with a man who may have been dead three hundred years (such was the leisure of antiquity), Longinus at the beginning of his essay opposes, in opposing Caecilius,

*With the exception of a few phrases I quote throughout from the translation by Frank Granger (London, 1935), which seems to me the most perspicuous English version. The exceptions are the result of a collation of the Granger and other versions with what is probably the definitive scholarly translation, by W. Rhys Roberts (Cambridge, 1899). All the modern translations render ὕψος as "sublime," and it has obviously been necessary to keep the word when it occurs in a quoted passage.

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both the Platonic and the Aristotelian doctrines, and holds that style is a compound of natural talent and conscious method. He thus parts with Plato's "divine madness" in the *Ion,* and implicitly claims for Thought and Diction, two of the non-structural elements in Aristotle's analysis of tragedy, a degree of objectivity which Aristotle's rhetorical view of poetic language could not include.

If literary method cannot alone produce a style, the judgment of which, says Longinus, "is the last fruit of long experience," it can "help us to speak at the right length and to the occasion." How much interpretation of a casual observation such as this, which is only common sense, the modern scholiast is entitled to develop, I do not know. Although Longinus may have in mind the orator and the *public* occasion, may we just see him reaching out for a criterion of objectivity for any sort of literary composition? The "right length" is the adaptation of form to subject; and is not the "occasion" the relation between the poet and the person to whom the poem is addressed? We have foreshadowed here, I think, a principle of dramatic propriety, a sense of the "point of view" in composition, the prime literary strategy which can never be made prescriptive, but which exhibits its necessity equally in its operation and in its lapse. Later, discussing metre, Longinus tells us that Elevation cannot be achieved in the trochaic, or tripping, metre, and we may dismiss the remark as the perennial fallacy which identifies certain fixed effects with certain metres. But if we can imagine "Lycidas" written in trochees and "The Raven" in iambuses, we might suppose the one would be worse, the other considerably better. And if we look at "length" and "occasion" in somewhat different terms we shall find ourselves again in the thick of one of our own controversies. Does not the occasion force upon the poet the objective and communicable features of his work? Are they not Mr. Winters' theory of the relation of "feeling" to "rational content" and Mr. Ransom's theory of a "texture" within a "structure"?

In exceeding the literal text of Longinus in this matter I hope that I have not also stretched two living critics into an agreement

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which they have scarcely acknowledged; nor should I ask them to acknowledge Longinus as their forerunner. I suggest that Longinus' question: Is there an art of "Elevation?" is the question we are asking today, somewhat as follows: can there be a criticism of convincing objectivity which approaches the literary work through the analysis of style and which arrives at its larger aspects through that aperture? That is the question of our time. In asking it, are we not following Longinus rather than Aristotle? Aristotle began with the conspicuous "larger aspects" of a mature literary genre, Greek tragedy, and got around to the problems of poetic language only at the end, and as a rhetorician (except for one curious remark about metaphor) who offers us shrewd but merely schematic advice about the use of figures.

## III

If there is an art of Elevation, if there is possible a coherent criticism of literature through its language, it follows that we must examine good and bad writers together, in order to arrive, not at rules, but at that "judgment of style which is the fruit of long experience"; to arrive at that sense of the length and the occasion which will permit us, as poets, to imitate not Homer's style but its excellence, in our own language. It is here that intensive literary criticism and literary tradition work together; it is here that we arrive at the idea of a literary tradition which does not enjoin the slavery of repetition, but of the emulation which comes of insight. We shall have of course to deal as best we can with the ambiguity of Longinus' word τέχνη. By the "art of height or of depth" does he mean criticism? Or does he mean the "art" of the poet? He means, I take it, both; and it is proper that he should. For our sense of the achievement of the past may issue in a critical acquisition of knowledge which is not to be put away in the attic when the creative moment comes. At this point one may profitably notice two characteristic defects, defects of its quality, that proud and self-sufficient writers fall into in attempting the elevated style. "Frigidity," says Longinus,

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is the over-elaboration of the academic writer, a violation of length due to aiming at "the curious and the artificial." The "feeling" (or the detail) is unreal in the sense that it is on a scale smaller than its intelligible form. Likewise, the opposite fault—and in describing it Longinus has written as good criticism as any I know, of Thomas Wolfe and the contemporary lyrical novel; he says: "Theodorus calls it the mock-inspired. It is emotion out of place and empty where there is no need of it, or lack of proportion where proportion is needed. Some writers fall into a maudlin mood and digress from their subject into their own tedious emotion. Thus they show bad form and leave their audience unimpressed: necessarily, for they are in a state of rapture, and the audience is not."

If this is the performance of the writer great by nature and beyond "art," Henry James gives us his dreary portrait: "The writer who cultivates his instinct rather than his awareness sits by finally in a stale and shrinking puddle." His awareness of what? I should say of the "occasion" and the "length," the sense of limiting structure and of what, within that limit, is to be objectively communicated and made known. This sense becomes operative through "art," τέχνη, technique, the controlled awareness *through* language of what can be made actual in language, resulting in a just, if unpredictable, proportion between what Longinus calls the "emotion" and the "subject." Doubtless any experienced reader of literature can point to the failures of great writers in the two extremes of disproportion corresponding to two forms of pride that prevent the complete discovery of the subject: the pride of intellect and the pride of feeling, the pride of will and the pride of instinct. (Perhaps the history of the imagination is the pendulum between these extremes.) Mr. Blackmur has shown us in the past few years how the thesis in Dostoevsky distorts or even wrecks the theme, the imaginative actuality in which the form ought to have been discovered under pressure of its internal necessity. In a more recent writer, D. H. Lawrence, we get both extremes of pride: the attack on the intellect in behalf of instinct, instinct itself hardening into a core

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of abstraction which operates as intellectual pride, as thesis; not as realized form.

The instances of "disproportion" could be multiplied, but I pause to remark my own digression, and to ask, as the eighteenth century critics seem not to have done, whether there is not already, in what I have said, a certain excess of gloss, commentary cut loose from the text commented upon, a self-indulgence which seems to attribute to the subject a comprehension which it is covertly claiming for oneself? Criticism should no doubt observe the same proprieties of occasion and length that we require of the imagination; but it has seldom done so, and I think with good reason. If criticism is only secondary to literature, it is thus the dependent partner, and for the hazards that it must face in every generation it must constantly worry the past for support, and make too much of what it revives, or perhaps even make it into something different. Perhaps I have got out of the Περὶ Ὕψους at this stage of the discussion only a general insight available, if not always used, as common property since Coleridge. Yet we should remember that Longinus alone seems to have achieved it in the ancient world.

I have been trying to see the outlines before I move on to some of the particular judgments in the Περὶ Ὕψους, of a possible framework into which to put Longinus' profound but topical dialectic. In the same chapter (II) in which the proportions of length and occasion are held to be established through "art" or method, he writes this crucial passage:

> Demosthenes says somewhere that in ordinary life luck is the greatest good, and that it cannot exist without another which is not inferior to it, namely prudent conduct. Following him we might say in the case of style, that nature takes the place of good luck; and art, of prudent conduct. *Most important of all we must learn from art, the fact that some elements of style depend upon nature alone.*

At this point four pages of the manuscript disappear, a loss of the first importance to critical theory. If the amateur Hellenist reads from classical criticism a passage in which the word "nature" occurs, he is likely to read it with Boileau or the English

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eighteenth century, and get entangled in the thickets of "nature," which they opposed to "art," when they were not effecting a compromise by making art nature to advantage dressed; and so on. It seems to me that we ought to support the passage just quoted with a full sense of the special kind of judgment that Longinus brings to bear upon the actual texture of Greek literature; he produces many examples which cannot be cited here. We could then just see in it the first declaration of independence from the practical, forensic eloquence of the rhetoricians.

"Most important of all we must learn from art, the fact that some elements of style depend upon nature alone." In trying to understand this nice oxymoron I shall take risks which are perhaps not greater than those taken by most commentators on the *Poetics*. Most important of all, I make Longinus say, we learn from the development of technique that stylistic autonomy is a delusion, because style comes into existence only as it discovers the subject; and conversely the subject exists only after it is formed by the style. No literary work is perfect, no subject perfectly formed. Style reveals that which is not style in the process of forming it. Style does not create the subject, it discovers it. The fusion of art and nature, of technique and subject, can never exceed the approximate; the margin of imperfection, of the unformed, is always there—nature intractable to art, art unequal to nature. The converse of Longinus' aphorism will further elucidate it: we must learn from nature that some elements of subject-matter, in a literary work, "depend" upon art alone. There is a reciprocal relation, not an identity—not, certainly, the identity of form and content—a dynamic, shifting relation between technique and subject; and they reveal each other. This is my sense of Longinus' primary insight. It is an insight of considerable subtlety that has a special claim to the attention of our generation.

## IV

I suppose we should agree that by and large the critical method

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of the *Poetics* is inductive. Aristotle's generalizations proceed from a scrutiny of one kind of literature, drama, chiefly from one kind of drama, tragedy, and from one kind of tragedy: Greek. Longinus repeats Aristotle's animadversions on "character," which Aristotle seems to think need not be much developed if the "plot" is good. We must constantly remind ourselves of the narrow range of literature at the command of the two great critics of antiquity; they lacked the novel, for one thing, and Aristotle evidently did not consider the works of his great predecessor and teacher worthy of the name of "poetry." The larger conception of a literature does not appear in the *Poetics*. Although Longinus, trained as he must have been in the rhetorical schools, did not see clearly whither he was heading, it is just the awareness of *literature at large* which raises his theory of the relation of language and subject to a higher degree of useful generality than any literary theory before him had reached. He is the first, though necessarily incomplete, literary critic. His question, put again, in its wider implications, is: What distinguishes literature from practical oratory, from history? A quality, he says in effect, beyond an immediate purpose. His discussion of imagination is what we should expect: it is the classical rhetorician's view of the image as a "mental picture," which he, along with his age, seems to believe must be laid on the work discreetly from the top. Yet the distinction between two widely different purposes in the controlled use of language puts his doctrine on a high yet accessible level of empirical generalization, and makes it possible for him to look beyond specific conventions to estimate the value of a literature offering a great variety of forms and structures.

It has been supposed by many critics that Longinus is not interested in structure, that his doctrine of "transport" and the "lightning flash" anticipates the romantic *frisson*, or that Pope did it justice when he called in Longinus to help him "snatch a grace beyond the reach of art." I think I have shown that Longinus would reject that art which is beyond its own reach. And what, in fact, I now wish to show is that Longinus is quite prepared to put his finger directly upon the problem of structure, and by

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implication to tell us that structure is not in the formal "type" or *genre,* a viable body of special conventions, such as the lyric, the ode, or the epic provides, but exists in the language of the poem.

After discussing, in Chapters VIII and IX, the five sources of Elevation in language (to which I shall return) he analyzes the effect, in terms of structure, of Sappho's Ode to Anactoria beginning Φαίνεταί μοι κῆνος ἴσος Θεοῖσιν. The analysis is brief (everything in Longinus is brief but the lacunae in the text), yet it is probably the first example in criticism of structural analysis of a lyric poem. (I ought for my purpose here to know more than I do, which is virtually nothing, about the ancient theory of the Passions.) I quote the entire passage:

> Let us now go on to see whether we have anything further by means of which we can raise our words to the sublime. Since, then, in the substance of everything, we find certain elements which naturally belong to it, we should of course find one cause of the sublime by always choosing the most relevent circumstances and by compounding them (ἐπισυνθέσει) to make, so to speak, one body (ἕν τι σῶμα ποιεῖν). For the audience is attracted, first by our choice of topics (ὃ μὲν γὰρ τῇ ἐκλογῇ . . . τῶν λημμάτων), and second, by the conciseness of our exposition. For example, Sappho takes from their actual setting the feelings that accompany the frenzy of love. Where then does she display her skill? In the tact with which she chooses and binds together supreme and intense feelings.
>
> Peer of the Gods he seemeth to me, the blissful
> Man who sits and gazes at thee before him,
> Close beside thee sits, and in silence hears thee
> Silverly speaking,
>
> Laughing love's low laughter. Oh this, this only
> Stirs the troubled heart in my breast to tremble!
> For should I but see thee a little moment,
> Straight is my voice hushed;
>
> Yea, my tongue is broken, and through and through me
> 'Neath the flesh impalpable fire runs tingling;
> Nothing see mine eyes, and a noise of roaring
> Waves in my ear sounds;

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> Sweat runs down in rivers, a tremor seizes
> All my limbs, and paler than grass in autumn,
> Caught by pains of menacing death, I falter,
> Lost in the love trance . . .

> Do you not wonder how she gives chase at once to soul and body, to words and tongue, to sight and color, all as if scattered abroad, how *uniting contradictions*,* she is frozen and burns, she raves and is wise? For either she is panic-stricken or at point of death; she is haunted not by a single emotion but their whole company.#

Towards the end of the Περὶ Ὕψους there is some scattered commentary on the rhetorical figures; but in the criticism of Sappho the language is not that of the tropes and figures. In so far as it concerns emotion, it is "psychological," if not very exact, even in the terms of the classical psychology of the faculties; yet perhaps it is not too much to claim for Longinus' perception of opposites in this poem, of the positive compulsion given tension by its negative, that it goes deeper and is more attentive to what the poem says than anything that Arnold has to say about Keats' or Milton's poetry. *He is trying to see what is happening in the poem.* If he is hampered by his affective terms, so was Mr. T. S. Eliot when in an early essay he was getting at a similar play of opposites (what Mr. Cleanth Brooks has since called "paradox") by proposing his theory of the positive and the negative emotion, and more especially the theory of the central "emotion" gathering up and controlling a variety of contingent "feelings." Mr. Eliot's early theory I should call advanced romantic criticism: it was struggling through the subjective effect towards the objective structure of the work. Longinus' criticism of Sappho is advanced romantic criticism, and as advanced as Mr. Eliot's.

One hesitates to present to Longinus a theory which I hope is

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*I have inserted into Granger's version Roberts' translation of καθ' ὑπεναντιώσεις because it conveys more accurately the force of the Greek, which means *opposite feelings* rather than "at variance within," as Granger has it.

#Roberts has it "a concourse of passions," which is more accurate. The Greek is ἵνα μὴ ἕν τι περὶ αὐτὴν πάθος φαίνηται, παθῶν δὲ σύνοδος — σύνοδος is literally a "coming together of roads," a cross-roads; so better perhaps than either, "their whole company" or a "concourse of passions" are the renditions, "a clash of feelings," "a crossing of feelings."

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not implicit in his phrase ἕν τι σῶμα ποιεῖν, "to make into one body"; it looks like an organic theory of poetry, but if we suppose that he is merely using the phrase analogically, and means by it no more than he says a moment later about the poem being a result of choosing and binding together intense feelings, we shall have to acknowledge the presence of a quite modern piece of criticism. At the least, he is telling us that in this poem contradictions are united, bound together, not that Sappho was expressing herself. We are a long step on the way to that critical moment when the affective vocabulary goes over into linguistic analysis, when instead of what the poem feels like, we try to decide what it says. That Longinus was further along this road than we may at a glance suspect there is evidence in the remarkable sentence which he plumps down before us without explanation: ". . . the sublime is often found where there is no emotion." There will be something to say about this when we come to the discussion of "harmony," or composition.

## V

The promise at the beginning of the treatise to produce the elements of an Art of Elevation leads to a good deal of miscellaneous specification, under five heads, for its achievement; but the dialectical links among the categories are not distinct. If we think of Longinus as Pascal's man of *finesse*, man of insights, and of Aristotle as a man of *géométrie*, man of deduction, we shall have to look twice at Mr. Orson's observation that, "Unlike Edmund Burke, who finds the sources of sublimity in qualities of the subject matter of art, Longinus finds them in the faculties of the author." This is partly true; but it is misleading, if we are led to suppose that Longinus tried but failed to erect a systematic philosophy of art, comparable to Burke's *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origins of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, but placing the origin of the ideas in the author. He is ambiguous at this point, but I have shown, I hope, that his considerable originality consists in shifting the center of critical interest, without reject-

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ing it as an "interest," from the genetic and moral judgment to the aesthetic, from the subject matter and the psychology of the author to the language of the work. When he describes the first of his five sources of Elevation as the "impulse towards what is great in thought," he speaks perhaps as a casual Platonist, but primarily as a rhetorician in the great tradition reaching from Aristotle to Cicero.

In distinguishing a critical insight from the intellectual discipline from which, to an extent, it may be a departure, we tend to assume that the insight has replaced the discipline; whereas it may merely alter it. It is not certain that we need a philosophical aesthetics in order to produce a work of art; at the Renaissance, I need hardly to observe, the education in rhetoric and oratory produced poets. Sidney is not too apologetic for "straying from Poetrie to Oratorie"; for, he says, "both have such an affinity in this wordish consideration. . . ." It was the point of view of his age. Disciplining that point of view was the art of rhetoric, one member of a tripartite whole completed by ethics and politics; rhetoric was the ethics of the public man in its appropriate discipline, the art of the enthymeme, or rhetorical syllogism.

The second of Longinus' categories, "strong and inspired emotion," proceeds from the first, or from a common source; it also is "due to nature." Here we come upon a curious and, as usual, undeveloped observation. Strong and inspired emotion is one source of, but it is not the same as, style. Pity, grief, and fear, he says, are "humble [ ταπεινά = lowly, mean] and without the note of the Sublime"—as if in "pity" and "fear" he had a critical eye to Aristotle, whose doctrine of Katharsis was practical and even "sociological." The curious observation honors the critic who puts "awareness" above system, for it enters an exception to the rule: "The masters of panegyric," Longinus says, "are seldom given to emotion." What, then, are they given to? An English instance will be helpful. The epigraph to "Lycidas" tells us that "The author bewails a Learned Friend"—but the author does nothing of the sort; the strong feeling is directed at the clergy,

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and even it is sufficiently assimilated into rich pastoral texture.*

I pass over sources two and three, the "framing of rhetorical figures" and "nobility of expression," with the remark that Longinus is prudential, like a good teacher, and on these topics not more rewarding than the rhetoricians, Demetrius and Dionysius. But number five, "Composition and distribution of words and phrases into a dignified and exalted unit," heads up the entire argument. "It is a unity of composition," he says, "attained through language." If it is so attained, it is not attained, though it may originate, in the inaccessible nobility of the author's mind. Observe again the superiority of Longinus' insight, with the specific work in mind, to his critical apparatus, which tends to the moralistic and academic. We may see composition here as *ordonnance,* "the best words in the best order." It is more than that. Composition is the total work, not the superaddition of method. Its effect is not to persuade but to entrance; it is "out of the common," not uncommon words, but words used uncommonly well. It is clear that Longinus, by and large, is not recommending the "grand style"; his translators have probably done him a disservice in rendering his characteristic adjective, μέγας as "grand"; it is, rather, great, unusual, *uncommon;* and likewise ὕψος, "height", which I understand as "excellence." Ἔκστασις is our subjective acknowledgement of the presence of the uncommon, of an objective order of unpredictable distinction. He is quite explicit in this matter. By means of "an appropriate structure, and by this means only, as we have sufficiently shown, (the best writers) give the effect of stateliness and distinction which is removed from the commonplace." In illustration he quotes a line from the *Hercules Furens,* of Euripides:

γέμω κακῶν δὴ κοὐκέτ' ἔσθ' ὅποι τεθῇ.

*I am loaded with sorrows nor can I take on more.* "The phrase is quite commonplace but it has *gained elevation* by the arrangement of the words." The fine statement that follows ought to

*Mr. John Crowe Ransom made this observation in "A Poem Nearly Anonymous," *The World's Body,* pp. 1-28.

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remove any remaining misconception of the nature of "transport," if we still suppose it to be the romantic shudder; it addresses itself to the whole mind:

> . . . if a work of literature fails to disclose to the reader's intelligence an outlook beyond the range of what is said, when it dwindles under a careful and continuous inspection, it cannot be truly sublime, for it has reached the ear alone. . . . For that is truly grand [μέγα] of which the contemplation bears repeating.

There must be, in short, a total quality of the work which abides its first impact; to that total quality he gives the name of composition.

It includes rhythm. Saintsbury, whose exposition of Longinus might have revived his influence had somebody else written it, misses the originality of Longinus' treatment of this subject. Longinus' location of rhythm in the total composition, as binding and bound up with it, is perhaps the best critical insight of its kind before Coleridge. Quoting a passage from Demosthenes, he makes the experiment of adding a syllable, and observes that the "sublime phrase is loosened and undone by lengthening of the final rhythm." Likewise, if the phrase were shortened by a syllable. His principle of prose rhythm is negatively stated, but it seems to me to hold for any kind of writing. It is: Prose rhythm should not have "a conspicuous movement of sound." It must seem, even if metaphysically it is not, at one with the meaning; it must not call attention to itself, unless (as in Tacitus, Gibbon, Doughty or Sir Thomas Browne) the "conspicuous movement of sound" is a tonal vehicle that once established is not distinguishable from, but is a part of, the subject itself. But if it is a rhythm "like that of a dancer taking his step before the audience," which the audience anticipates, it distracts attention from what is being said to who is saying it. It is a disproportion in composition similar to that of the orator or the poet who "digresses from the subject into his own tedious emotions." Had Longinus been discussing the rhythm of verse I should have been able to cite Swinburne and *The Age of Anxiety* by Mr. W. H. Auden.

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## VI

I have postponed consideration of the third source of Elevation to this concluding section because it pertains in part to metaphor, the *pons asinorum* of literary criticism. If on this subject Longinus is unsatisfactory, it is only a matter of degree; here everybody is unsatisfactory, even Mr. I. A. Richards, whose *Philosophy of Rhetoric* offers a good deal but promises too much. It is a field of enquiry of a difficulty coordinate with that of the burden of the mystery. Here again Longinus is prudential, but he no doubt gives us as good an account as any of the classical precept of nothing-too-much. Don't use too many metaphors, unless you are overwhelmed by emotions which may make them credible. Follow Aristotle, perhaps in the *Rhetoric;* soften the metaphor up by inserting "as if" or "just as though" and making it a simile that does not assert improbable resemblances.

One goes through the Περὶ Ὕψους, and then the *Rhetoric,* half-heartedly and vainly, looking for something better than this, from the literary point of view, that Longinus might have overlooked, or for something as far-reaching as Aristotle's own Delphic pronouncement in Chapter 22 of the *Poetics,* where he says:

> It is a great thing indeed to make a proper use of these poetical forms, as also of compounds and strange words. But the greatest thing by far is to be a master of metaphor. It is the one thing that cannot be learnt from others; and it is also a sign of genius, since a good metaphor implies an intuitive perception of the similarity in dissimilars.

That is very nearly the beginning and the end of our own enquiries into metaphor; but I am rash enough to question whether Aristotle, as a Greek, could know, as we have known since Shakespeare and Donne, how similar dissimilars can be made to seem, or (to take an extreme view which is not unknown today) how similar they can be made to be. *Metaphor,* says Aristotle, is the transference of names, through the permutations of genus and species, or by analogy. Metaphor by analogy takes the formula of arithmetical proportion, a quantitative and relational

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procedure. We are thus in the Greek Cosmos, an ordering of solid objects under a physics of motion, in which the formal object offers but a narrow margin of analogy to any other. If the ancient enquiry into the structure of metaphor was less resourceful than ours, it was not I daresay because Aristotle was less intelligent than the best modern critics. Our multiverse has increasingly, since the seventeenth century, consisted of unstable objects dissolving into energy; and there has been no limit to the extension of analogy. Criticism follows whatever it is given to follow. Are the famous lucidity and the restraint of the Greeks evidence that by nature they were more lucid and more restrained than we? I doubt it. For even the physical sight may be controlled by the religious selectivity, which fixes the height and the direction of the casement framing our inspection of the world. To introduce at the end of an essay so large and so undeveloped a conception is an impropriety of length and occasion; I offer it as historical relativism in defense of Longinus and of ourselves.

On no single kind of literature is Longinus as searching as Aristotle on tragedy. But I risk the guess that he came nearer to a comprehensive theory of literary form than any other ancient critic. If he did not quite make the leap to a complete theory of the language of imagination, we must remember that nobody in the ancient world did. He shared Aristotle's cosmetic sense of the simple relation between word and thing; in a world of fixed forms, thing was unyielding; the word, like its object, retained a plastic visibility. With the Greeks the "transference" of "names" was limited to the surface designation, to the comparison of objects in the round, to sculpturesque analogy. Metaphor was a feature of discourse to be described, not a metaphysical problem to be investigated. We need not see as a personal limitation Longinus' failure to investigate a problem that for him did not exist. The permanent critics do not settle the question. They compel us to ask it again. They are the rotating chairmen of a debate only the rhetoric of which changes from time to time. Among these we may think of Longinus, if we will read him not in our own age, but in his.

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# Troilus and Cressida *and Plato*

*I. A. RICHARDS*

"IN 'TROILUS,' ALL CHAUCER'S CHARACTERS ARE DEBASED, even Pandarus, hard as the task may seem. Cressida is a wily profligate, Troilus a whining babbler." This judgment from Jusserand[1] may serve us as an excellent warning against reading the views of our own day into Shakespeare. We are a long way now from Jusserand, but equally exposed to this danger—and more exposed to the worse risk of supposing that the meanings we may rightly find in the work are to be limited by what we can conjecture to have been Shakespeare's intentions. These Notes, on what *Troilus and Cressida* may say to readers who have recently gained an acquaintance with the *Iliad* and the *Republic* (in a General Education program, for example), try to dodge between these dangers. Shakespeare's works are the offspring of Language and Tradition—of English in a peculiarly inflamed state and of a meander of the tradition which proved to be more than ordinarily fertile. We may reasonably find meanings in the plays without attributing them to Shakespeare himself; remembering that we have to find them and not plant them there ourselves.

Jusserand will remind us of another danger—the conventional wrenching of the detached line. "Even in his most hastily composed plays . . . just as we were about to revolt, to protest against a puppet show, behold, the magician emerges from his torpor, life circulates, and the wooden doll of a moment ago now utters words that no ages can ever forget."[2] In a footnote: "Example: to Ulysses, a mere puppet through most of the play, is given the famous line: 'One touch of nature makes the whole world kin.' (*Troilus*, III, iii, 181)." This is indeed a famous line. In spite of

[1] *A Literary History of the English People*, Vol. III, page 253.
[2] *Op. cit.*, page 310.

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many protests, it will continue to be quoted as if the "one touch of nature" were something like "one impulse from the vernal wood" and not an ignoble slavery to fashion:

*That all with one consent praise new borne gaudes.*

More lessons lie here than can be enumerated. We have to try to take them to heart.

In this case both the fame and the wrenching seem more than usually explicable. In moods of general benevolence, to think of the whole world becoming kin is agreeable and relieves anxiety. And it seems particularly appropriate that this should happen through "one touch of nature," as though nature were some sweet recreative influence restoring us to an original innocence. The *kin-kind* pun becomes active perhaps. In contrast, the specifying line is unflattering, painfully true, pointing to things that good-hearted folk would rather not think of. Worse still, *this* "touch of nature," which unites us in such a humbling bond, seems (if we stress *one* as I think we should) to be set over against other touches of nature apt to seal us all up "in will peculiar and self-admission."

These estimates of *Troilus and Cressida* and of its characters seem to be still widely received. I have heard highly accredited opinion voice a doubt whether the play deserves a place in a General Education course even as a sequence to Homer and Plato. I hope here to give some reasons for thinking that conventional views underestimate the play; that its scenes are among the most summoning of Shakespeare's glances at life, that they have at least an affinity with and an elective power of reflecting Plato at his height; in particular that Troilus is as little a "whining babbler" as Ulysses is a "wooden doll," and in general that current interpretations misread the play as badly as the tag-quotation mistakes the famous line.

Our conception of Troilus himself will, of course, be the key to the rest of the argument. But since Ulysses is the source of a major piece of testimony about Troilus we may well consider the Prince of Ithaca a moment. His great speech on order (I, iii,

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75-137) has received deserved attention. Less has been paid to his aspect as head of an Intelligence Service. As he himself claims to Achilles (III, iii, 202):

*There is a mystery—with whom relation*
*Durst never meddle—in the soul of state . . .*
*All the commerce that you have had with Troy*
*As perfectly is ours as yours, my lord,*

In this mystery Ulysses is a master. He proves it at point after point in the play—with Achilles throughout, with Ajax (II, iii, 101), with Cressida (IV, v, 54-63), with the movements of Diomede (IV, v, 278-82; V, i, 93) and all through Act V, Scene ii. He is the supremely well qualified man to describe Troilus to Agamemnon:

*The youngest son of Priam, a true knight;*
*Not yet mature, yet matchless; firm of word,*
*Speaking in deeds and deedless in his tongue;*
*Not soon provok'd nor, being provok'd, soon calm'd:*
*His heart and hand both open and both free;*
*For what he has he gives, what thinks he shows;*
*Yet gives he not till judgment guide his bounty,*
*Nor dignifies an impare thought with breath:*
*Manly as Hector, but more dangerous;*
*For Hector, in his blaze of wrath, subscribes*
*To tender objects; but he, in heat of action*
*Is more vindicative than jealous love.*
*They call him Troilus; and on him erect*
*A second hope, as fairly built as Hector.*
*Thus says Aeneas; one that knows the youth*
*Even to his inches, and with private soul*
*Did in great Ilion thus translate him to me.*

Shakespeare might almost have had Jusserand's opinion—"a whining babbler"—in mind when he wrote these lines. Unless there is evidence in Troilus' actual behavior and speeches that Ulysses is utterly wrong here, we should not set such testimony aside. And when we remember that Shakespeare, here, as so often, is follow-

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ing his sources closely, there is the less reason for minimizing its weight.

Let us look then at what Troilus does and says. In the first scene, he indulges in some most elegant rhetorical sighs. That he blames himself for his passion it would be unfair to use against him; but it may be admitted that these early scenes do little to prepare for what is coming. They do not point forward to philosophic action. With the Trojan War Council (II, ii), however, his stature is changed. He becomes the reflective apologist of Honour, a theme and cause (Homeric with a difference) in which he easily triumphs over Helenus:

*You are for dreams and slumbers, brother priest,*
*You fur your gloves with reasons*

and even over Hector himself, who at the end cries out:

*I am yours*
*You valiant offspring of great Priamus.*

The argument of this scene is the mainspring of the play and will, I believe, repay as much examination as any reader has time to give to it. In line 53 comes Troilus' great question—which Act V, Scene ii is to force him to rethink:

*What is aught but as 'tis valued?*

Hector's answer can be read, I suggest, with profit, as a comment on Troilus' own later struggle with this truly central problem of all philosophy: value and fact, the ideal and the actual, or however we care to phrase it.

*But value dwells not in particular will;*
*It holds his estimate and dignity*
*As well wherein 'tis precious of itself*
*As in the prizer. 'Tis mad idolatry*
*To make the service greater than the god;*
*And the will dotes, that is inclinable*
*To what infectiously itself affects,*
*Without some image of the affected merit.*

Each sentence here, and every word (especially the small ones, the *as well*, the *of itself* and the *in*) deserves the fullest imagina-

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tive study. Troilus is to face his own "mad idolatry," to measure the service with the god in the instance of Cressida—driven to it by the sharpest case of jilting in literature—and, above all, to watch the division and reunion of will and reason in himself under the severest testing that they can perhaps be given. He has a long way to go before this and here he replies to Hector chiefly in terms of fidelity—with a marriage figure:

*How may I avoid*
*Although my will distaste what it elected,*
*The wife I chose? There can be no evasion*
*To blench from this and to stand firm by honour.*

He is not announcing his marriage (see IV, ii, 73); he is simply using the image most present to his mind. In his next speech, the lines:

*We may not think the justness of each act*
*Such and no other than event doth form it,*

are again premonitory and perhaps exculpative.

Hector praises these speeches but quotes Aristotle's echo of the *Republic* (539) and finds them superficial. He then in the spirit of Plato's great analogy (matrimony apart) parallels the individual will with that of the state:

*Nature craves*
*All dues be render'd to their owners . . .*
*If this law*
*Of Nature be corrupted through affection*

(a pivotal word in the play)

*And that great minds, of partial indulgence*
*To their benumbed wills, resist the same,*
*There is a law in each well-order'd nation*
*To curb those raging appetites that are*
*Most disobedient and refractory.*

Then suddenly, in spite of "these moral laws of nature and of nations" and though

*Hector's opinion*
*Is this, in way of truth,*

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he veers. With an infirmity of purpose which supports Ulysses' judgment of him and with a feckless gallantry matching the poor strategy of his "roisting challenge" (1. 208), he joins Paris and Troilus:

*My sprightly brethren, I propend to you*
*In resolution to keep Helen still;*
*For 'tis a cause that hath no mean dependance*
*Upon our joint and several dignities.*

The contrast between this inconsequence and the policies of "that same dog-fox Ulysses" is one of many which make the play an exercise in meditation on the sources of power.

The Orchard scene (III, ii) shows us a Troilus in whom I see no ground to doubt his own description:

*I am as true as truth's simplicity*
*And simpler than the infancy of truth.*

Truth, as he sees it, is indeed in its infancy here. It is to grow up swiftly. That he prefaces these lines with an "Alas!" and something very like a determination to be deaf to certain doubts about Cressida, does not in the least impare them.

How we see Troilus here depends in a measure upon how we conceive Cressida. I like to make her very young—almost with her finger in her mouth still—a little actress through and through, trying out her powers without caring or knowing much about the roles she picks up or drops. Something of this sort fits both the giddy speed of her transitions (rather than betrayals) and these queer forebodings in Troilus both here and in the farewell scene at dawn. Poor Cressida. Truly she has

*an unkind self, that itself will leave,*
*To be another's fool . . .*
*I know not what I speak.*

To such a natural putter-on of possible passions Shakespeare can give language of great power:

*Time, force and death,*
*Do to this body what extremes you can;*
*But the strong base and building of my love*

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*Is as the very centre of the earth*
*Drawing all things to it.*

(IV, ii, 108)

Troilus (III, ii, 186) simply said, "as earth to the centre." This young novice Cressida is an experimentalist in feelings, curious and sparing as a wine taster, though exuberant in expression:

PANDARUS. *Be moderate, be moderate.*
CRESSIDA. *Why tell you me of moderation?*
*The grief is fine, full, perfect, that I taste,*
*And violenteth in a sense as strong*
*As that which causeth it: how can I moderate it?*
*If I could temporise with my affection . . .*

(IV, iv, 1-6)

Neither Cressida, nor Troilus in his following speech, know what they are saying. Only the audience—or the close re-reader with the whole play in mind—can see what is happening or into what examples their words will turn them. The fashion in which Cressida can temporise (intemperately) with her affection will be Troilus' punishment for the words he now utters. With Arachne and Niobe coming later in the play (and in Troilus' own mouth) it is hard to suppose that the ensuing specimen of *hubris* is accidental. "What a pair of spectacles is here!" as Pandarus cries, with more reason than he knows. (I must in passing protest against the traditional excess of contempt[1] for this tender-hearted and fanciful snob. He has laid aside, it is true, the oath-breaking bow of the *Iliad* to play Cupid. He has, no doubt in a superior degree, the vicarious eroticism of the matchmaker, but the insult I have quoted from Jusserand is unfair to Chaucer and to Shakespeare as well as to Pandar. It is letting his name take over the offices of perception and judgment.) "How now, lambs!" he says.

TROILUS. *Cressid, I love thee in so strain'd a purity,*
*That the bless'd gods, as angry with my fancy,*

[1] ". . . The filthy, prurient, self-appointed tool, who revels in garbage of words and garbage of deeds . . ." The Arden Shakespeare, 1906. *The Interpretation of Dreams* came into English in 1913.

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*More bright in zeal than the devotion which*
*Cold lips blow to their deities, take thee from me.*
CRESSIDA. *Have the gods envy?*
PANDARUS. *Ay, ay, ay, ay; 'Tis too plain a case.*

It is truly. And for this blasphemy they *will* take his goddess from him, farther than to the Greek camp.

TROILUS. *Hark! you are call'd: some say the Genius so*
*Cries 'Come!' to him that instantly must die.*

This Genius, however he got here, comes from the *Republic*: "And Lachesis sent with each, as the guardian of his life and the fulfiller of his choice, the genius that he had chosen." (X, 620E). Its business is to see that we do not escape the life-plan we have selected from among those cast before us. It is the same Being which Shakespeare put into *Julius Caesar* II, i, 63-69:

BRUTUS. *Between the acting of a dreadful thing*
*And the first motion, all the interim is*
*Like a phantasma or a hideous dream:*
*The genius and the mortal instruments*
*Are then in council, and the state of man,*
*Like to a little kingdom, suffers then*
*The nature of an insurrection.*

These lines share two things with *Troilus and Cressida*: this Genius, so unlike the others in Shakespeare; and the image of the state of man in insurrection, also derived, ultimately, from the *Republic*:[1]

*Kingdom'd Achilles in commotion rages*
*And batters down himself.*

(II, iii, 186-8)

We will pass now to the Betrayal Scene (V, ii) where the strength of the government in Troilus is tested. With Ulysses at his elbow and Thersites (another sort of connoisseur in human nature) suitably prone in the other wing as observers and chorus, Troilus has to watch Cressida, at the mouth of Calchas' tent,

[1] I have written elsewhere, in *How to Read a Page* (page 74) of the Platonic echoes in I, iii, 116-124.

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*palter* (It is Diomede's word) with her new lover. He has to see the sleeve he gave to her as a love-token, 'five-finger-tied' (I think) to Diomede's helmet.

Before considering the crisis speeches, it is well to consider what sort of shock Troilus is undergoing:

ULYSSES. *You shake, my lord, at something: will you go?*
*You will break out.*

and with what measures he is attempting to meet it:

TROILUS. *She strokes his cheek!*
ULYSSES. *Come, come.*
TROILUS. *Nay, stay; by Jove, I will not speak a word:*
*There is between my will and all offenses*
*A guard of patience.*

As Cressida goes to fetch the sleeve, Ulysses, with his hand—thought-readerwise—on Troilus' shoulder, says:

*You have sworn patience.*
TROILUS. *Fear me not, sweet lord.*
*I will not be myself, nor have cognition*
*Of what I feel: I am all patience.*

Such unnatural self-control cannot last. This guard of patience, though reinforced, as it is, *seven* times in the Scene (whether through the Language or the Tradition, it came from the *Republic*) cannot be expected to hold down forever a city in such turmoil.

*Never did young man fancy*
*With so eternal and so fixed a soul.*

It is "as true as Troilus"; and this man, as we know from Ulysses,

*in heat of action*
*Is more vindicative than jealous love.*

Something has to happen. We have to consider, as we watch it happening, what it is, and by what canons this behavior is exemplary.

SOCRATES: Poetry copies men: acting either under force or of their own free will; seeing themselves in the out-

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come to have done well or ill; and, in all this, feeling grief or joy. Is there something in addition?

GLAUCON: Nothing.

SOCRATES: Is a man of one mind with himself in all this? Or is there division and fighting with himself—as there was when in vision he had opposite opinions at the same time about the same things. . . . Our souls at any one time are attacked by endless opposite views. There was one thing, however, we didn't say then which has to be said now.

GLAUCON: What was it?

SOCRATES: We said then, I believe, that a good man who is ruled by reason will take such blows of fate as the loss of a son or anything very dear to him less hardly than other people. . . . So, because there are two opposite impulses in such a man at the same time about the same thing, we say there are two things in him. One of them is ready to be guided by the law which, I take it, says that it is best to keep quiet as far as possible when griefs come and not to cry out, because we are not certain what is good and what is evil in such things, and to take them hardly does not make them any better. Reason says that nothing in man's existence is to be taken so seriously, and our grief keeps us back from the very thing we need as quickly as possible in such times.

GLAUCON: What is that?

SOCRATES: To take thought on the event; and, as we order our play by the way the cards fall, to see how to order our acts, in view of what has come about, in the ways reason points to as the best. Don't let us be like children when they have had a fall, and go on crying out with a hand on the place. Look after the wound first and pick up what has had a fall, and make grief give place to medical help.

(*Republic*, 603-4)

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Or consider again:

> SOCRATES: And don't the best things undergo the least changes and motions that come to them from other things . . . For example, the body is changed by meat and drink and work, and every plant by the light of the sun and the wind. . . . But isn't the change least in the plant or body that is healthiest and strongest? So of the soul. It will be the bravest and wisest soul which is least moved and changed from without.
>
> (*Republic*, 381)

Again, it may be through Language or Tradition (and we may separate or combine these with the greatest of ease) that the conception of the self-governing soul controls this scene. Now we watch it meeting a storm which could readily break the heart or overthrow the reason of a less healthy or weaker being than Troilus.

> ULYSSES. *All's done my lord.*
> TROILUS. *It is.*
> ULYSSES. *Why stay we, then?*
> TROILUS. *To make a recordation to my soul*
> *Of every syllable that here was spoke.*

His impulse to disbelieve is going to make him forget what he has seen and heard—unless he forestalls it—much as Darwin is said to have made *immediate* note of discrepant facts. By the next line but one:

> *Shall I not lie in publishing a truth?*

the cleavage is beginning. The old faith and hope, and new evidence and despair, are too strong for one another:

> *Sith yet there is a credence in my heart*
> *An esperance so obstinately strong,*
> *That doth invert the attest of eyes and ears*
> *As if those organs had deceptious functions,*
> *Created only to calumniate.*

Something has to give way; who was it at the mouth of Calchas' tent?

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TROILUS. *Was Cressid here?*
ULYSSES. *I cannot conjure, Trojan.*
TROILUS. *She was not, sure.*
ULYSSES. *Most sure she was.*
TROILUS. *Why, my negation hath no taste of madness.*

He carries this far enough to make Thersites wonder: "Will he swagger himself out on's own eyes?" But the two truths are so equal that this is no way out. Something must break and it is Cressid who divides:

*this is, and is not, Cressid.*

"What is aught but as 'tis valued?" When the valuations become irreconcilable and insuperable, the thing splits and the thinker (or thinger) then has to remain *one* (if he can) himself:

TROILUS. *This she? no, this is Diomede's Cressida.*
*If beauty have a soul, this is not she,*
(That which he loved in her, was not this)
*If souls guide vows, if vows are sanctimony,*
(Two certainties, if *vows* and *sanctimony* are understood aright)
*If sanctimony be the gods' delight,*
(SOCRATES: Do the gods love sanctimony because it is sanctimony? Or is it sanctimony because the gods love it? . . . What is this art of serving the gods, Euthyphro? What the great result of it? The care of the soul?)
*If there be rule in unity itself,*
*This is not she.*
(The very thing which holds him together and keeps the universe from shaking to pieces must make this separation in her)
*O madness of discourse,*
*That cause sets up, with and against itself,*
*Bi-fold authority!*
(In this consists a spirit, that it is self-reflective).

The two in Troilus that correspond to the two Cressids change place: reason, the very rule in unity itself, safely throwing off its own authority, and that very perdition (which is also loss of one of the Cressids) taking up the rule:

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*where reason can revolt*
*Without perdition, and loss assume all reason*
*Without revolt.*

This is language become itself a translucent instance of what it would describe; it both *says* what it means and illustrates it. Troilus, absorbed now in the mystery of how

*this is and is not Cressid,*

seems to draw from the stroke itself the resolution. The opposites are all before him

*more wider than the sky and earth*

and yet they come together and are indistinguishable—as Ariadne's clue and Arachne's web are merged in "Ariachne's broken woof." (As escape from a labyrinth containing a devouring monster, with an ensuing betrayal; a penalty for *hubris* with a horrible transformation.) With that *broken,* however anguishingly it echoes, we know that it applies not to his heart but to whatever held him to Cressid—some fabric of gossamer texture. And as the last waves of this earthquake subside we can compare the hard darkness of:

*strong as Pluto's gates*

with an airy brightness:

*strong as heaven itself*

and feel the expansion and reunion occurring already in this suddenly restored lover. The bonds of heaven, that seemed so strong, are dissolv'd. We see through Troilus' eyes what it is that

*with another knot, five-finger-tied*

Diomede has gained:

*orts of her love*
*The fragments, scraps, the bits and greasy reliques*
*Of her o'er-eaten faith.*

And discerning Ulysses here speaks for us when he asks,

*May worthy Troilus be half attach'd*
*With that which here his passion doth express?*

Troilus' reply shows us that he knows how to deal with that half-attachment. In Coleridge's words, "having a depth of calmer

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element in a will stronger than desire, more entire than choice . . . the same moral energy is represented as snatching him aloof from all neighborhood with her dishonour." It is like Shakespeare to give the summing-up to his almost monstrously detached and avid observer, the sick artist.

THERSITES. *He'll tickle it for his concupy.*

When Aeneas arrives seeking him, this 'whining babbler' is almost whole again.

TROILUS. *Have with you prince. My courteous lord, adieu.*
*Farewell, revolted fair! and Diomede,*
*Stand fast, and wear a castle on thy head.*
ULYSSES. *I'll bring you to the gates.*
TROILUS. *Accept distracted thanks.*

* * *

TROILUS. *The bless'd gods as angry with my fancy*
*. . . take thee from me.*
CRESSIDA. *Have the gods envy?*
TROILUS. *If sanctimony be the god's delight . . .*
*This is not she.*

Socrates, in puzzling Euthyphro—a very Deuteronomic sort of young man—with questions about the service and the god and the outcome of the service, is keeping well within that self-confident theologian's intellectual reach, almost within his grasp. But Plato was to give Socrates other questions which were to empty such inquiries as:

*If sanctimony be the god's delight.*

In the more than sunlight of the Idea of the Good, "which gives true being to whatever deep knowledge is of, and the power of knowing to the knower" (*Republic*, 508) all contrasts between the things the gods value and their valuings fade out. "What is aught but as 'tis valued?" is a dangerous question, as Hector

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pointed out, when applied to "particular will." But it is other words for the Idea of the Good if the valuing is that of knowledge. And "Have the gods envy?"—which Homer's Achilles could ask as literally as any child—turns, on reflection, into a deep inquiry about

*degree, priority and place,*
*Insisture, course, proportion, season, form*
*Office, and custom, in all line of order.*
(I, iii, 86-9)

Troilus does misplace his adoration. And to do that *is* to offend the jealous gods. Indeed the more closely we read the two Council Scenes, the more closely knit

*If there be rule in unity itself,*

this "most hastily composed play" will be found. Even in what may seem no more than Agamemnon's preliminary prosing:

*which are indeed naught else*
*But the protractive trials of great Jove,*
*To find persistive constancy in men*

even in these

*there is seen*
*The baby figure of the giant mass*
*Of things to come at large.*

This is not unusual in Shakespeare—though this play, with *Julius Caesar,* is unwontedly thick with premonitions and echoes. What is exceptional, to my mind, is the degree to which its central thought seems to accord with Plato's. Others have wondered whether "the strange fellow" who had written to Ulysses (III, iii, 95) might not have been Plato. I find a strange fellowship throughout. And perhaps the strangeness is the condition of the fellowship:

*For speculation turns not to itself*
*Till it hath travell'd, and is married there*
*Where it may see itself.*

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## *Movie Idols, in Plato's Cave*

Day at our backs
We paid to enter
Here into dark
Where shadows saunter
Lovelier than we
And younger, free
Of eyelid tic
And daily lumber.

And we fell down
Before a glamor
Tall as a dream
Of lust in summer,
And prayed the image
Clear of damage
When light should aim
Its daytime hammer.

So were we made
Like gods all over
Having found in this cave
The self quite other,
For these blond ghosts
Behaved like us,
Though all their love
Ran somehow smoother

We will not move:
Here we inherit
The happy love
Denied by daylight.
We have no wish
To lug our flesh
Out from this cave
And prop it upright.

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## *The Return*

We speak as travellers. These things we have seen
And are come to tell you. Cities down in rubble,
The women barren outnumbering the men
And children drunk asleep beside the railroad.

This but a day ago. Since the spring came back,
Few of us believing in it, there have been rains
And days of hot sun softening the rocks—
Some of us saw birds and heard their songs.

Rivers that heretofore sluiced filth to sea
Are thick with salmon. And by night the lovers
Move without fear along the streets. We say
All this knowing you think us liars,

Yet think not so. There is a health among us.
Have you not noticed how the air grows clear
Of smoke and dust? Even now inside your house
The god stands smiling, half way down the stair.

—LOUIS O. COXE

## *The Emperor of China*

The Emperor of China will not lose life
In wrangling with lightning event
And cold abuse of accident upon the Tibetan hills,
He is careful in his house, his days well-spent.

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The Emperor of China will not lose gold
In his age, his appetites are plain.
His carriage is pulled by ambitious men,
But his travel is not for gain.

The pleasure surfeit of his rosy court
Has built wide circles around his heart,
And he has turned solid, an aged lord.
Hangs from his throne like a shriveled gourd.

But what anxiety next to his ear
Destroyed his comfort's gloom and made him pray
For the rod of life to whip his back
And stir his lust for a single day?

A newest concubine has come to sing
A revolution in his heart and to him bring
Torment in a pleasure of transiency,
For she dances in his hand and dances free.

The Emperor of China has left his court
Of admiring responses but finds no throne
Of delight in the dark private room,
Where shackled to his wall but not to him,
She dances alone.

The Emperor of China has learned to know
The distance between desire and thing,
The cold object beauty is, and the cold queen
Of a physical kingdom that will not let in
The rejected king.

—HAROLD KAPLAN

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# *Ernest Hemingway*

D. S. SAVAGE

ERNEST HEMINGWAY IS KNOWN AS the author of a number of miscellaneous novels and short stories, as well as two books on blood sports. His best known works, however, are two "novels of love and war," *A Farewell to Arms* and *For Whom the Bell Tolls,* and his significant development, such as it is (for only in a very special sense can he be said to develop at all) may best be seen by a comparison of those two works. In the second section of this essay such a comparison will be made, but to begin with I propose to examine the essential or typical qualities of the Hemingway presented to us in the general body of his work.

Hemingway first received attention, when he was publishing his earlier stories, as a *stylist.* And this is interesting, for the content of his stories is in great part crude, violent action, not essentially dissimilar from the subject-matter of the stories found in the cheap "pulp" magazines of a primarily masculine appeal. It may reasonably be assumed that Hemingway satisfies, on a somewhat higher level of culture or of sophistication, the same imaginative cravings fed among the semi-literate proletarian masses of England and America by such productions as *War Aces* and *Action Stories.* The difference is that where the writer of "pulp" stories is writing deliberately to a known consumer-demand, and where his products are, consequently, mechanical and lacking in psychological content, Hemingway is consciously an artist, writing to achieve an aesthetic effect, and is himself, therefore, emotionally involved in his own work. It follows that in his stories the emphasis is not, as in the "pulp" magazines, entirely on the crude, mechanical action, taking place in a complete psychic vacuum. The psychological implications of the violence

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of the "pulp" mentality are made explicit. In reading Hemingway we are made aware that the violent action itself, of so many of his stories, arises from the need for the alleviation of a prior and underlying psychic vacuity—an emotional state which is sometimes in his work suggested with great skill.

Hemingway is, within very narrow limits, a stylist who has brought to something like perfection a curt, unemotional, factual style which is an attempt at the objective presentation of experience. A bare, dispassionate reporting of external actions is all that Hemingway as a rule attempts in presenting his characters and incidents. His typical central character, his "I", may be described generally as a bare consciousness stripped to the human minimum, impassively recording the objective data of experience. He has no contact with ideas, no visible emotions, no hopes for the future, and no memory. He is, as far as it is possible to be so, a *de-personalized* being.

A brief glance at Hemingway's first book, a collection of tales entitled *In Our Time* (1925), will give us some notion of the essentials of his attitude and his equipment as a writer. These tales are really a series of brief, laconic sketches from the life of a man, together forming a fragmentary novel. The settings of the sketches alternate between the American countryside of Nick's boyhood, the scenes of war on the Italian Front, and post-war America and Europe. The action, however, is slight and subordinated to the predominant mood, conveyed with admirable honesty and artistic scrupulousness, which is one of utter and complete negation, almost a nihilism. "Nick," wrote D. H. Lawrence, reviewing the book on its appearance in England, "is a type one meets in the more wild and woolly regions of the United States. He is the remains of the lone trapper and cowboy. Nowadays, he is educated, and through with everything. It is a state of conscious, accepted indifference to everything except freedom from work and the moment's interest. Nothing matters. Everything happens. Avoid one thing only: getting connected up. If you get held by anything, break it. Don't get away with the idea of getting somewhere else. Just get away, for the sake of

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getting away. Beat it! . . . His young love-affair ends as one throws a cigarette-end away. 'It isn't fun any more.'—'Everything's gone to hell inside me.' . . . He doesn't love anybody, and it nauseates him to have to pretend he does. He doesn't even *want* to love anybody; he doesn't want to go anywhere; he doesn't want to do anything. He wants just to lounge around and maintain a healthy state of nothingness inside himself, and an attitude of negation to everything outside himself. And why shouldn't he, since that is exactly and sincerely what he feels?"

*In Our Time,* like much other of Hemingway's work, is fairly transparently autobiographical; it reads for the most part like a literal, though of course uncommonly discriminating, transcription of bare experience. A simple stylist like Hemingway, in search of a material upon which to exercise and develop his skill, would naturally turn first of all to the material nearest to hand —i.e., the material of simple personal experience. But a mind of Hemingway's negative and static quality will, it is evident, be unable to furnish sufficient material of a straightforward autobiographical kind for the simple craftsman to work on. Unlike a novelist of more complex and active mentality, gifted with psychological insight and the power to project, through the creation of character, a personal vision of experience—for whom, consequently, there would be no abrupt transition from "autobiography" to "fiction"—Hemingway is forced to turn for material to the plane, as I have said, of the "pulp" magazine. His peculiarly negative view of human life quite naturally leads him to project his vision, when he leaves straight autobiography, into figures drawn from the lowest stratum of human existence, where life is lived as near as possible on an animal, mechanical level.

Here is a passage, from a work which is evidently of an autobiographical character rather than not, which has the advantage of representing Hemingway's characteristic factual style while at the same time presenting a fragment of typical subject-matter, which has its own implications on the human, moral plane. It is an incident in a military retreat from the novel, *A Farewell to Arms.*

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"I order you to cut brush," I said. They turned and started down the road.

"Halt," I said. They kept on down the muddy road, the hedge on either side. "I order you to halt," I called. They went a little faster. I opened up my holster, took the pistol, aimed at the one who had talked the most, and fired. I missed and they both started to run. I shot three times and dropped one. The other went through the hedge and was out of sight. I fired at him through the hedge as he ran across the field. The pistol clicked empty and I put in another clip. I saw it was too far to shoot at the second sergeant. He was far across the field, running, his head held low. I commenced to reload the empty clip. Bonello came up.

"Let me go finish him," he said. I handed him the pistol and he walked down to where the sergeant of engineers lay face down across the road. Bonello leaned over, put the pistol against the man's head and pulled the trigger. The pistol did not fire.

"You have to cock it," I said. He cocked it and fired twice. He took hold of the sergeant's legs and pulled him to the side of the road so he lay beside the hedge. He came back and handed me the pistol.

"The son of a bitch," he said.

The transition from writing on this level to the subsequent and alternative level of the human underworld involves no very considerable descent, it is clear. The following is from a sketch entitled "The Killers."

"What are you going to kill Ole Andreson for? What did he ever do to you?"

"He never had a chance to do anything to us. He never even seen us."

"And he's only going to see us once," Al said from the kitchen.

"What are you going to kill him for, then?" George asked.

"We're killing him for a friend. Just to oblige a friend, bright boy."

"Shut up," said Al from the kitchen. "You talk too goddam much."

"Well, I got to keep bright boy amused. Don't I, bright boy."

"You talk too damn much," Al said. "The nigger and my bright boy are amusing themselves. I got them tied up like a couple of girl friends in the convent."*

The wider implications of the above examples of Hemingway's

*Men Without Women (1928).

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manner and matter are, of course, related to the almost complete extrusion of his vision of life upon the plane of the external—the plane of extreme objectivization where experience is alienated from its subject. To deprive life of its inwardness, and to see men, not as personalities, but as objects, as things, is to open the door, not for a morally condemnable cruelty or brutality so much as for an even more devastating, because cold and spiritless, contempt of human values and of human life, which puts killing a man on the same level of actuality as cooking an egg or blacking one's boots. For good measure, I give a further, and incidentally later, example of Hemingway's objective eye for violence.

> The other fellow pulled the one who was hit back by the legs to behind the wagon, and I saw the nigger getting his face down on the paving to give them another burst. Then I saw old Pancho come around the corner of the wagon and step into the lee of the horse that was still up. He stepped clear of the horse, his face white as a dirty sheet, and got the chauffeur with the big Luger he had; holding it in both hands to keep it steady. He shot twice over the nigger's head, coming on, and once low.
>
> He hit a tire on the car because I saw dust blowing in a spurt on the street as the air came out, and at ten feet the nigger shot him in the belly with the Tommy gun, with what must have been the last shot in it because I saw him throw it down, and old Pancho sat down hard and went over forwards. He was trying to come up, still holding on to the Luger, only he couldn't get his head up, when the nigger took the shot gun that was lying against the wheel of the car by the chauffeur and blew the side of his head off. Some nigger.†

Hemingway's *de-personalized* style, it appears, is the result of no detached, arbitrary choice. It is a style actually perfectly expressive of his outlook on life. In the flat, chaotic, elementary world into which we are introduced by Hemingway's fiction, everything is objectivized: inwardness, subjectivity, is eliminated, and man himself is made into an object, a thing. This entire extrusion of personality into the outward sensational world makes his characters the inwardly-passive victims of a meaningless determinism. They inhabit a world which, because it has been

†*To Have and Have Not* (1937).

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voided of inwardness, is entirely without significance. The Hemingway character is a creature without religion, morality, politics, culture or history—without any of those aspects, that is to say, of the distinctively human existence.

Such an outlook is a peculiar one in a writer because it precludes the possibility of organic and interesting development. The Hemingway world is one of mechanical repetition, and in the series of Hemingway's nine or ten books there is no inward continuity to keep pace with the chronological sequence. It is therefore impossible to consider Hemingway as if there were some coherently developing pattern running through his progress as a writer. That there is a development of some kind, a *static* development, so to speak, I shall presently try to show. But the critic, I think, need feel under no special obligation to consider Hemingway's works as a sequence. The pattern is essentially a fixed one, made by the running of the mind in a deterministic groove. Apart from the two "war and love" novels which must be examined separately, there is only one book which throws any special light on Hemingway's mind, and that is the book on the Spanish bull-fight entitled *Death in the Afternoon,* which serves the purpose of showing in a simple and explicit form Hemingway's fascinated preoccupation, which up to now I have refrained from commenting on, with the fact of death.

The profound spiritual inertia, the inner vacancy and impotence, which is a mark of all Hemingway's projected characters, issues in a deadening sense of boredom and negation which can only be relieved by violent, though still essentially meaningless activity. The more violent the activity, the greater the relief from the sickening vertigo of boredom. But activity of this kind is in fact a drug, and like most other kinds of drug, for its effect to be maintained it must be taken in constantly increasing quantities. Ultimately, however, the state of boredom, certainly one of the most horrible of human experiences, reduces itself not merely to the absence of meaning, but to the total absence of a sense of life. Indeed, it is a feature of violent action that while it cannot produce a convincing sense of meaningfulness, it can

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at any rate produce an illusory sense of *life*. Violent action itself, however, is almost always destructive action. Its end is in death. And, ultimately, when the sense of life itself vanishes, there is only one way in which it may be recaptured, and that is by the violent, absolute contrast of life with death. Life regains its "reality" in such cases—becomes, that is, aesthetically sensational and vivid in itself—only when it is brought up against the stark, black negation of the void.

Writing, in *Death in the Afternoon*, of his early interest in the bull-fight, Hemingway says:

> I was trying to write then and I found the greatest difficulty, aside from knowing truly what you really felt, rather than what you were supposed to feel, and had been taught to feel, was to put down what really happened in action; what the actual things were which produced the emotion you experienced. . . . The only place where you could see life and death, *i.e.* violent death now that the wars were over, was in the bull ring and I wanted very much to go to Spain where I could study it. I was trying to learn to write, commencing with the simplest things, and one of the simplest things of all and the most fundamental is violent death. . . .
>
> So far, about morals, I know only that what is moral is what you feel good after and what is immoral is what you feel bad after and judged by these moral standards, which I do not defend, the bullfight is very moral to me because I feel very fine while it is going on and have a feeling of life and death and mortality and immortality, and after it is over I feel very sad but very fine.

*Death in the Afternoon*, which partakes of the nature of an esoteric introduction to a blood-cult, is written throughout in a tone of alternating naive solemnity and cynical jocularity. But here, he seems to imply, in a senseless, mechanical and phony world, is something which seems to be real and meaningful, and which may somehow be approached in a way which will impart a sense of significance and reality to living.

> . . . Someone with English blood has written: "Life is real; life is earnest; and the grave is not its goal." And where did they bury him? and what became of the reality and the earnestness? The people of Castilla have great common sense. They could not produce a poet who would write a line like that. They know death is the unescapable

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> reality, the one thing any man may be sure of; the only security; that it transcends all modern comforts and that with it you do not need a bath-tub in every American home, nor, when you have it, do you need the radio. They think a great deal about death, and when they have a religion they have one which believes that life is much shorter than death. Having this feeling they take an intelligent interest in death. . . .

Such passages as this do at least reveal the nature, whatever one may think of its value, of the chief preservative of Hemingway's significance as a writer, that kind of desperate honesty which, once the bottom has been knocked out of things by painful and horrifying experience, cannot rest content with the pusillanimous compromises with which most people afterwards patch up their lives, and which one detects in the revulsion from the "bath-tub in every American home," and in the manifest dread of any kind of "faking" (in writing as in bull-fighting) which is displayed throughout the book. A glance at one further facet of Hemingway's personal outlook, and we can pass on from this brief survey of his typical work. In *Green Hills of Africa* (1936), a tedious description of a hunting trip, there are two passages which are of interest for the light they throw on Hemingway as a writer. The first concerns *subject.*

> I thought about Tolstoy and about what a great advantage an experience of war was to a writer. It was one of the major subjects and certainly one of the hardest to write truly of, and those writers who had not seen it were always very jealous and tried to make it seem unimportant, or abnormal, or a disease as a subject, while, really, it was just something quite irreplaceable that they had missed. . . .

The second concerns, not subject, and not technique, exactly, but the writer's intention:

> The reason every one now tries to avoid it, to deny that it is important, to make it seem vain to try to do it, is because it is so difficult. Too many factors must combine to make it possible. . . . The kind of writing that can be done. How far prose can be carried if anyone is serious enough and has luck. There is a fourth and fifth dimension that can be gotten. (And if a writer can get this). . . . Then nothing else matters. It is more important than anything he can do. The chances are, of course, that he will fail. But there is a chance that he succeeds. . . . It

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> is much more difficult than poetry. It is a prose that has never been written. But it can be written, without tricks and without cheating. With nothing that will go bad afterwards. . . . First, there must be talent, much talent. Talent such as Kipling had. Then there must be discipline. The discipline of Flaubert. Then there must be the conception of what it can be and an absolute conscience as unchanging as the standard meter in Paris, to prevent faking. Then the writer must be intelligent and disinterested and above all he must survive.

Such, or something such, is the conception of himself which Hemingway would like to project into the public mind. It is an interesting conception.

A novelist, of admitted literary merit, who lacks all the equipment generally expected of a practitioner of his art except a certain artistic scrupulousness and poetic sense, is something of a phenomenon. And while one would hardly suppose Hemingway could be considered as, intrinsically, a very important writer, yet, it is obvious, his purely symptomatic significance is considerable. For what does Hemingway represent but that, in a special form, which might be termed the *proletarianization* of literature: the adaptation of the technical artistic conscience to the subaverage human consciousness? Sociologically considered, Hemingway seems to me to epitomize a phase of culture in which all the inward values which have sustained that culture in the past are vanishing, and nothing much is left but the empty shell of civilization—the shell of *technique*. The characters of Hemingway reflect accurately the consciousness of the depersonalized modern man of the totalitarian era, from whom all inward sources have been withdrawn, who has become alienated from his experience and objectivized into his environment.

C. S. Lewis, in his *Preface to Paradise Lost*, drawing a distinction between the Primary Epic of Homer and the Secondary Epic of Virgil and Milton, points out that the former kind is deprived of the *great subject* possessed by the latter because "the mere endless up and down, the constant aimless alternations of glory and misery, which make up the terrible phenomenon called a Heroic Age," admit of no historical pattern or design, which can only be given "when some event can be held to effect a

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profound and more or less permanent change in the history of the world, as the founding of Rome did, or still more, the fall of man."

> No one event is really very much more important than another. No achievement can be permanent: today we kill and feast, tomorrow we are killed, and our women led away as slaves. Nothing "stays put," nothing has a significance beyond the moment. Heroism and tragedy there are in plenty, therefore good stories in plenty; but no "large design that brings the world out of the good to ill." The total effect is not a pattern, but a kaleidoscope. . . . Primary Epic is great, but not with the greatness of the later kind. In Homer, its greatness lies in the human and personal tragedy built up against this background of meaningless flux. It is all the more tragic because there hangs over the heroic world a certain futility. "And here I sit in Troy," says Achilles to Priam, "afflicting you and your children." Not "protecting Greece," not even "winning glory," not called by any vocation to afflict Priam, but just doing it because that is the way things come about. . . . Only the style—the unwearying, unmoved, angelic speech of Homer—makes it endurable. Without that the *Iliad* would be a poem beside which the grimmest modern realism is child's play.

It does not seem far-fetched to perceive some points of similarity between the Heroic Ages of the past and our own blood-stained epoch as it moves into an increasingly bleak future, and between the bards who recited the deeds of the ancient heroes and such a novelist as Hemingway—bearing in mind the retrogressive character of our own "heroism," and, of course, putting the disparity between Homer and Hemingway into some proportion with that existing between, say, Hector or Agamemnon and Harry Morgan.

## II

In any serious consideration of the writings of Ernest Hemingway, the fact must not be lost sight of that their author belongs to that generation of men whose formative adult years were spent on the battlefields of Europe during the first world war. It would scarcely be too much to say that Hemingway's special type of outlook is *a product of the battlefield*. Hemingway's comments upon war as a subject for the writer have

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already been noted. And it is a revealing fact that his two most coherent and most successful books, *A Farewell to Arms* (1929) and *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1941), upon which his fame largely rests, are both "novels of love and war."

Each of these novels stands apart from the bulk of Hemingway's work by virtue of its embodiment of a sustained pathos; and this pathos, it is evident, is an aspect of its interior connection with Hemingway's own personal experience and vision of life. While much of Hemingway's writing is the product of a somewhat uneasy *attitudinizing*, *A Farewell to Arms* impresses one with its surprisingly genuine and unforced quality. It is naive rather than cynical, bewildered rather than "tough," and there is a minimum of deliberate sensational violence. Although published ten years after the end of the first world war, its clearly autobiographical character would seem to justify its being related to the early and comparatively unformed Hemingway, the Hemingway who was himself, in youthful immaturity, thrust by circumstances into the scarifying circumstances of war and left to digest his experience as best he could.

For a novelist with no coherent inner vision of human existence, the problem of form must present almost insuperable difficulties: difficulties which may be envisaged from a reading of Hemingway's two chaotic lesser novels, not considered here—*The Sun Also Rises* and *To Have and Have Not*. But in *A Farewell to Arms* this problem is solved by the exterior pattern of the events in which the curiously nameless hero is passively involved. The story is straightforward. An American enlisted in the medical section of the Italian Army, the hero meets, near the front, an English nurse called Catherine Barkley. They are flirtatiously attracted to one another, and there is a rather flat emotional encounter between them, very well described. (Catherine is mourning for her lover, killed in France, to whom she had put off her marriage.) Then the American is wounded and sent back to a hospital where he is nursed by Catherine, and they fall into an intimate sexual relationship. After his recovery, the American returns to the battle-front, but is involved in a dis-

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orderly retreat, is arrested and about to be shot by military police, but he frees himself, and "through" with the war, makes his way to the town where Catherine is living and escapes with her down the lakes to neutral Switzerland. Here, away from the war and in outwardly idyllic circumstances, the whole accidental, haphazard series of events reaches its meaningless, accidental conclusion with Catherine's death at the maternity hospital in giving birth to a stillborn infant.

In this novel, the war, of which the central character is a more or less acquiescent and occasionally involved onlooker, is only the background and setting for the central story of the relationship between the soldier and the nurse. There is a real suggestion of pathos in the impersonal, unimpassioned account of their forlorn, uncomprehending, tacit endeavor to maintain the illusion of the happiness and meaningfulness of their fortuitous relationship against their own deeper apprehension of lovelessness, frustration and fatality, although the emphasis is entirely on the objective occurrences, and the inward significance is never directly touched upon. The following passage will provide an example of Hemingway's honest realism in dealing with his "love interest":

> We walked down the corridor. The carpet was worn. There were many doors. The manager stopped and unlocked a door and opened it.
> "Here you are. A lovely room."
> The small boy in buttons put the package on the table in the centre of the room. The manager opened the curtains.
> "It is foggy outside," he said. The room was furnished in red plush. There were many mirrors, two chairs and a large bed with a satin coverlet. A door led to the bathroom.
> "I will send up the menu," the manager said. He bowed and went out. I went to the window and looked out, then pulled a cord that shut the thick plush curtains. Catherine was sitting on the bed looking at the cut-glass chandelier. She had taken her hat off and her hair shone under the light. She saw herself in one of the mirrors and put her hands to her hair. She did not look happy. She let her cape fall on the bed.
> "What's the matter, darling?"
> "I never felt like a whore before," she said. I went over to the window

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> and pulled the curtain aside and looked out. I had not thought it would be like this.
> "You're not a whore."
> "I know it, darling. But it isn't nice to feel like one." Her voice was dry and flat.
> "This was the best hotel we could get in," I said. I looked out of the window. Across the square were the lights of the station. There were carriages going by on the street and I saw the trees in the park. The lights from the hotel shone on the wet pavement. Oh, hell, I thought, do we have to argue now?
> "Come over here please," Catherine said. The flatness was all gone out of her voice. "Come over, please. I'm a good girl again." I looked over at the bed. She was smiling.
> I went over and sat on the bed beside her and kissed her.
> "You're my good girl."
> "I'm certainly yours," she said.

There is, too, a queer, twisted pathetic quality in the lovers' final interview, when Catherine is on her deathbed.

> "Do you want me to get a priest or anyone to come and see you?"
> "Just you," she said. Then a little later, "I'm not afraid. I just hate it."
> "You must not talk so much," the doctor said.
> "All right," Catherine said.
> "Do you want me to do anything, Cat? Can I get you anything?" Catherine smiled, "No." Then a little later, "You won't do our things with another girl, or say the same things, will you?"
> "Never."
> "I want you to have girls, though."
> "I don't want them."

These short passages are enough, perhaps, to make plain something of the novel's relatively sympathetic quality. There is an absence of deliberate harsh violence; what violence there is comes, unsought, from the external circumstances of war, and is received passively. This is in keeping with the character of the young man, who is not a proletarian tough, but an average young bourgeois American. He is—not a sufferer, for although he endures suffering he refuses to accept it—but a victim, who has not yet become hard and cynical and addicted to violence as an end in itself. If, at the beginning of the story, he has a philosophy, it is a simple one of self-centred enjoyment, although towards the end, and

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after Catherine's death, this gives place to a naive "tragic" outlook, which is expressed in such reflections as these:

> Often a man wishes to be alone and a girl wishes to be alone too and if they love each other they are jealous of that in each other, but I can truly say we never felt that. We could feel alone when we were togther, alone against the others. It has only happened to me like that once. I have been alone while I was with many girls and that is the way that you can be most lonely. But we were never lonely and never afraid when we were together. I know that the night is not the same as the day: that all things are different, that the things of the night cannot be explained in the day, because they do not then exist, and the night can be a dreadful time for lonely people once their loneliness has started. But with Catherine there was almost no difference in the night except that it was an even better time. If people bring so much courage to this world the world has to kill them to break them, so of course it kills them. The world breaks every one and afterward many are strong in the broken places. But those that will not break it kills. It kills the very good and the very gentle and the very brave impartially. If you are none of these you can be sure it will kill you too but there will be no special hurry.

The harsh note of suppressed grief on which this story closes expresses the fatalistic stoicism which arises in the young American out of his inherent inner passivity as it is affected by his sense of futility and of loss. At such an intensity of suffering there are usually only two courses open to the human heart, a receptive softening or a cynical hardening. But we already know that a desperate, bitter hardness is a characteristic of Hemingway's work as a whole.

A survey of the ground covered by the greater part of Hemingway's writings shows it to be that indicated in the first part of this essay—the delineation of an eviscerated, chaotic world of futility and boredom lit up with flashes of violent action, where life is brought into a sensational vividness only by contrast with the nullity of death. The bulk of Hemingway's writing expresses consciously an outlook on life which is negative to the point of nihilism. Yet, abruptly, at the conclusion of the Hemingway opus we find a work—*For Whom the Bell Tolls*—of an undeniably sustained and positive character, which has been

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widely received as revealing a profound and positive insight into the human condition and the life of our time. What sort of enigma have we here?

That there is a reversal of attitude of a decisive kind is quite clear. For in this latter book we have a pattern, not of aimlessness, but of positive direction and sense of purpose, and a depiction, not of nihilistic despair but of lyrical acceptance, where futility is replaced by meaningfulness, and, instead of merely factual externality there is a significant, organic pattern to sustain the interior structure of the narrative. The pathos with which the story is imbued is a pathos quite different in quality from that of the Italian novel—it is a pathos which derives, not from a negative sense of victimization at the hands of life, but from a kind of subdued, lyrical ecstasy of acceptance.

The story concerns a young American, Robert Jordan, who espouses the cause of the Republicans in Spain during the Civil War, enlists with the Government forces as a dynamiter, and is entrusted with a mission, involving almost certain death, behind the enemy lines. Under the guidance of the old peasant, Anselmo, he reaches the hiding-place, a cave in the mountains, of the group of guerrillas who are to assist him in blowing the bridge on the specified day. There he encounters a mixed group of primitive people, including Pablo, the surly and untrustworthy leader of the group, Pilar, his powerful, earthily-sagacious wife, and a girl, Maria, whom they have rescued, after she has been raped, from the fascists, and with whom he quickly establishes an intimate relationship. The atmosphere among the little group is tense, partly because of the antagonism which arises between Jordan and Pablo, and partly owing to the necessary hazards of existence in enemy territory. But what contributes most to the psychical intensity which permeates the life of this little group and draws them together in bonds of intimacy is their nearness to the fatality felt to be involved in the accomplishment of the mission which has brought them into combination with the newcomer. After surviving some hazardous circumstances, Jordan, with the others, blows the bridge, but is wounded while escaping and

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left to face certain death from the approaching enemy, which he does with a gun in his hand and in his sustained mood of subdued ecstasy.

Nothing more clearly brings out the completeness of the alteration of attitude in the later novel than the juxtaposition of the following passages from each book, the Italian and the Spanish, concerning the heroes' attitudes towards the emotional aura that surrounds every cause for which men are prepared to kill and to die. This is from the earlier book:

> I did not say anything. I was always embarrassed by the words sacred, glorious and sacrifice and the expression in vain. We had heard them, sometimes standing in the rain almost out of earshot, so that only the shouted words came through, and had read them, on proclamations that were slapped up by billposters over other proclamations, now for a long time, and I had seen nothing sacred, and the things that were glorious had no glory and the sacrifices were like the stockyards at Chicago if nothing was done with the meat except to bury it. There were many words that you could not stand to hear and finally only the names of places had dignity. Certain numbers were the same way and certain dates and these with the names of the places were all you could say and have them mean anything. Abstract words such as glory, honour, courage or hallow were obscene beside the concrete names of villages, the numbers of roads, the names of rivers, the numbers of regiments and the dates.

Nothing could be more opposed to this than such sentiments as these expressed in the later novel:

> At either of those places you felt that you were taking part in a crusade. That was the only word for it although it was a word that had been so worn and abused that it no longer gave its true meaning. You felt, in spite of all bureaucracy and inefficiency and party strife something that was like the feeling you expected to have and did not have when you made your first communion. It was a feeling of consecration to a duty toward all of the oppressed of the world which would be as difficult and embarrassing to speak about as religious experience and yet it was authentic as the feeling you had when you heard Bach, or stood in Chartres Cathedral or the Cathedral at Léon and saw the light coming through the great windows; or when you saw Mantegna and Greco and Breughel in the Prado. It gave you a part in something that you could believe in wholly and completely and in which you felt

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> an absolute brotherhood with the others who were engaged in it. It was something that you had never known before but that you had experienced now and you gave such importance to it and the reasons for it that your own death seemed of complete unimportance; only a thing to be avoided because it would interfere with the performance of your duty . . .

That a very peculiar transposition of emotional attitudes has been effected somewhere between the two novels is obvious. But by what agency has this startling reversal been brought about?

The answer is not far to seek. The characters in this novel prove on examination to be characters no less elementary than those in Hemingway's previous books, but to their elementary, stripped humanity has been added a rudimentary political sense. *Politics* appears to be the pivot which has enabled Hemingway to swing from a completely negative emotional polarity towards life to a positive one.

If this is the case, then it would appear that the claim of the Spanish novel to real and positive significance—a claim which has not been backward in coming from certain quarters—depends very largely upon the quality of the political consciousness displayed in it. Now, a political awareness of such a valid and enlightening character must, it is plain, be something very complex and organic to its possessor's personality, must at least affect, or be affected by, many other departments of its possessor's mind. Can this be said of Hemingway's political consciousness? It cannot.

I must pass over here the question of Hemingway's own political affiliations, of which I know little except that in 1936, with his compatriot, the socialist novelist, John Dos Passos, Hemingway visited Loyalist Spain* and came back a strong Communist sympathizer. In his writings, however, apart from a propagandist play entitled *The Fifth Column*, the first work of

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* . . . where, according to an article in the radically leftist *Partisan Review* (April, 1938) ". . . Dos Passos found bombs horrifying, bloodshed gruesome, anarchists hounded by a Stalinist camarilla, the People's Front conceding to Anglo-French imperialism and suppressing socialism; (and where) Hemingway found bombs intriguing, bloodshed exciting, anarchists 'treasonable,' the People's Front noble, socialism nonsense" . . . etc. etc.

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Hemingway's to show any social awareness is the novel *To Have and Have Not,* published in 1937, which is a crude chronicle of violent action (there are nine killings) upon which is superimposed, towards the end, a "social" moral of the most elementary nature—a series of mechanical contrasts of the lives of certain members of the parasitical bourgeoisie with the under-privileged workers. The hero, an individualist adventurer named Harry Morgan, after a number of violent illegal escapades, dies, shot in the stomach, uttering the following profound observations:

> "A man," Harry Morgan said, looking at them both. "One man alone ain't got. No man alone now." He stopped. "No matter how a man alone ain't got no bloody chance."
> He shut his eyes. It had taken him a long time to get it out and it had taken him all of his life to learn it.†

In *For Whom the Bell Tolls,* the rudimentary quality of Robert Jordan's political consciousness is barely disguised, and we may safely take it that the quality of Jordan's insight accurately reflects Hemingway's own.

> You're not a real Marxist and you know it. You believe in Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. You believe in Life, Liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Don't ever kid yourself with too much dialectics. They are for some but not for you. You have to know them in order not to be a sucker. You have put many things in abeyance to win a war. If this war is lost all of those things are lost. But afterwards you can discard what you do not believe in. There is plenty you do not believe in and plenty that you do believe in.

So much, then, for the quality of Hemingway's political insight, which, from its appearance in his works, would seem to be very meagre indeed. It is enough, however, to justify a black-and-white taking of sides in an armed struggle. But politics is the pivotal point only for what is in effect a total transposition of emotional attitude. What the nature is of that reorientation

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†It seems to have taken Hemingway quite a long time, too. In *Green Hills of Africa,* published only a year previously, he was writing in this vein: "If you serve time for society, democracy, and the other things quite young, and declining any further enlistment make yourself responsible only to yourself, you exchange the pleasant, comforting stench of comrades for something you can never feel in any other way than by yourself," etc. etc.

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which, it is plain to see, gives this novel its organic structure and its sustained, epical positiveness, can now be made clear.

It is here that we touch upon the seeming paradox which makes it possible to speak of Hemingway's as a "static" development. For what has occurred between the two novels is not a development, or unfoldment, at all, but a psychological shifting which has made possible a *retrogressive recapitulation* of an essentially identical theme. *For Whom the Bell Tolls* actually re-presents the same basic emotional situation as that stated in *A Farewell to Arms,* but turned, as it were, outside in. Whereas the accidental circumstances of war, sex and death, the poles of experience which provide the focal points for the emotional pattern, impose, in the earlier book, an external pattern on the narrative, reflecting the attitude of the central character as a passive victim, those identical circumstances are, in the later book, given an inward, positive significance and made intrinsic to the story, which attains thereby an interior coherence which is expressed stylistically in the rapt, exalted quality of the writing. It is exactly as though an emotional fixation, impressed on the mind by a certain original pattern of experience as the mind moved outward centrifugally to life, has determined, after a period of immobility, not a development, but an inward, centripetal, recapitulative movement, in which the accidentals become intrinsic; the negatives, positive; the mechanical and outward the organic and inward. This whole process of reversal is aptly conveyed in the embarrassingly rhapsodic style of the Spanish novel, emotionally orientated as it is towards the central cult-acceptance of sexuality and death, which is in interesting contrast to the emotional and verbal asceticism of the Italian book.

Death provides the primary emotional focal point of the novel. From the moment he appears it is plain that Robert Jordan is going to his death. His own awareness of this fact serves not only to intensify his sense of the vivid immediacy of the little life which remains to him, but to throw depths of fortuitous significance into his physical union with the girl, Maria. Just as in the earlier novel, here too the emotional series is brought to an

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end by death. But for the death, accidental and as it were peripheral, of Catherine—death experienced as meaningless objective fact and deprivation—is here substituted a death which is deliberate and essential, embraced by the central character himself as the ultimate factor of subjective experience. And not only death is here embraced positively, and emotionally sanctioned, but also those other pivotal points of the Hemingway situation—sexuality (or "love") and war.

The relationship of Catherine and the American "Tenente" in the Italian novel is that of equals, and it retains some vestiges of human dignity which bring it within measurable distance of love, as distinct from animal sexuality. But that of Maria and Robert Jordan is one of uncontaminated animality, so uncontaminated indeed that Hemingway finds it possible to endow it with an absolute, "mystical" significance. "When I am with Maria," ruminates Jordan, "I love her so that I feel, literally, as though I would die and I never believed in that nor thought that it could happen." The emotional orgasm stimulated by his sense of proximity to death elevates every experience for Jordan into a realm of pseudo-mystical excitement. The mystico-sexual experiences of Robert Jordan reveal their nature, if that is in any doubt, by their existence in a psychic void, they have no connection with and no effect upon his other activities—although that perhaps is inaccurate, for there would appear to be a direct connection with death and with killing. And here the third significant transposition of attitude makes itself felt. The hero of *A Farewell to Arms*, passively involved in war, as passively accepts killing, and even himself dispassionately kills when the necessity seems forced on him—which happens only once in the book. And the context is not unfavourable to such animadversions on war as the following:

> "Tenente," Passini said, "we understand you let us talk. Listen. There is nothing as bad as war. We in the auto-ambulance cannot even realize at all how bad it is. When people realize how bad it is they cannot do anything to stop it because they go crazy. There are some people who never realize. There are people who are afraid of their officers. It is with them that war is made."

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"I know it is bad but we must finish it."
"It doesn't finish. There is no finish to a war."
"Yes there is."
Passini shook his head.
"War is not won by victory. What if we take San Gabriele? What if we take the Carso and Monfalcone and Trieste? Where are we then? Did you see all the far mountains today? Do you think we could take all them too? Only if the Austrians stop fighting. One side must stop fighting. Why don't we stop fighting? If they come down into Italy they get tired and go away. They have their own country. But no, instead there is a war."
"You're an orator."
"We think. We read. We are not peasants. We are mechanics. But even the peasants know better than to believe in a war. Everybody hates this war."

In the later novel, however, war and killing are much more enthusiastically undertaken.

"My rabbit," Robert Jordan said and held her as close and as gently as he could. But he was as full of hate as any man could be. "Do not talk more about it. Do not tell me any more for I cannot bear my hatred now."
She was stiff and cold in his arms and she said, "Nay. I will never talk more of it. But they are bad people and I would like to kill some of them with thee if I could. But I have told thee this only for thy pride if I am to be thy wife. So thou wouldst understand."
"I am glad you told me," he said. "For to-morrow, with luck, we will kill plenty."
"But will we kill Falangists? It was they who did it."
"They do not fight," he said gloomily. "They kill at the rear. It is not them we fight in battle."
"But can we not kill them in some way? I would like to kill some very much."
"I have killed them," he said. "And we will kill them again. At the trains we have killed them."

But there is no need for the multiplication of instances. So much must suffice. If the earlier and typical Hemingway, the underlying factors of whose work I have done my best to bring to light in the first part of this essay, represents an aspect of the widespread sickness of our civilization, the Hemingway of *For*

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*Whom the Bell Tolls* reveals that sickness in an advanced stage, sickness masquerading as health, and, accepted as such, precluded from the possibility of being resisted. Of social, or "political" insight, in this book, there is none. Hemingway's sole claim to such insight rests upon his perception, of dubious worth in the context, of the inadequacy of individualism—"No matter how a man alone ain't got no bloody chance"—and the superiority of what he had previously been pleased to term, in revulsion, "the pleasant, comforting stench of comrades." Hemingway's ostensibly "profound" realization of the fact of human solidarity—which is all of moral insight that can be said to emerge from the Spanish novel—permitting, as it does, under scanty "political" justification, the division of men and women into two armed camps equipped and ready for mutual slaughter—hardly possesses any intimate relationship to the epigraph from John Donne from which the novel takes its title.

As for the consequences of Hemingway's peculiar retrogression —a certain loss of sincerity and asceticism of style, the proneness to a peculiar sentimentalism, and the readiness to entertain the cheap substitutes for thought manufactured by political factions —we can safely leave these to the enjoyment of that enormous public which Hemingway has now found and which, one presumes, shares, to a measurable extent, his outlook and values.

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# *Three Poets*

*YVOR WINTERS*

LOSSES, by *Randall Jarrell*. Harcourt, Brace. $2.00.
THE DISPOSSESSED, by *John Berryman*. William Sloane Associates. $2.50.
THE JUDGE IS FURY, by *J. V. Cunningham*. The Swallow Press and William Morrow. $2.00.

THE TWO MARKS BY WHICH we most readily recognize a poet, I presume, are first an ability to grasp and objectify a particular subject so that it is rendered comprehensible both as an individual thing and as a symbol of general experience, and second a command of the potentialities of language, phrase by phrase, including the rhythmic potentialities. Neither of these abilities will ever develop very far by itself: the subject cannot be defined satisfactorily in general unless it is defined well in detail, and the language, phrase by phrase, cannot be made to say much unless the poet knows what he is trying to say. Nevertheless, the gift of language can sometimes carry a poet a fair distance without much support from thought: the poetry so achieved will always be in a large measure unsatisfactory, but it may be memorable at least in part. Swinburne is an example, and so in somewhat different ways are Collins and Mallarmé. When Valéry writes "Masse de calme et visible réserve," when Stevens writes "Than mute bare splendors of the sun and moon," when Tate writes "So blind, in so severe a place," we know that we are in the presence of living language and that if we master the whole statement we may conceivably find ourselves in the presence of great poetry. But without the gift of language, the best subject in the world will fall absolutely dead from the hand.

What I wish to point out, and I do it regretfully, is this: that Randall Jarrell is wholly without the gift of language. With the best of intentions and some reasonably good topics, he displays, line by line, from beginning to end of his book, an utter incapacity to state anything memorably; and he frequently displays a distressing capacity to make serious topics appear ludicrous. There is not much one can do in a case like this except to illustrate the defect. This is from *Pilots, Man Your Planes*:

> *The carrier meshed in its white whirling wake,*
> *The gray ship sparkling from the blue-black sea,*
> *The little carrier—erupts in flak,*
> *One hammering, hysterical, tremendous fire.*
> *Flickering through flashes, the stained rolling clouds,*

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*The air jarred like water tilted in a bowl,*
*The red wriggling tracers—colonies*
*Whose instant life annexes the whole sky—*
*Hunt out the one end they have being for,*
*Are metamorphosed into one pure smear*
*Of flame, and die*
*In the maniacal convulsive spin*
*Of the raider with a wing snapped off, the plane*
*Trailing its flaming kite's-tail to the wave.*

If I had received this description, written out as prose, from a student in freshman composition at Stanford, there is scarcely a phrase in it which I should not have underlined as either trite or clumsily obvious; furthermore, I think that there is scarcely a teacher of freshman composition at Stanford (I should hesitate to speak for the teachers in the great universities of the east) who would not mark it similarly. The passage is dead; furthermore, one will find nothing appreciably better in Jarrell. Occasionally, however, as he approaches the ludicrous, one may find something worse. This is the last stanza of *The Breath of Night*:

*Here too, though death is hushed, though joy*
*Obscures, like night, their wars,*
*The beings of this world are swept*
*By the Strife that moves the stars.*

This is the first stanza of another poem:

*When I was home last Christmas*
*I called on your family,*
*Your aunts and your mother, your sister;*
*They were kind as ever to me.*

These two stanzas (and there are many more like them) are the sort of thing that one would expect to see published by a female genius in a country newspaper.

I realize, and in fairness should confess, that the world is against me in this judgment. Among the eminent critics who praise Jarrell in very high terms on the jacket are Joseph Warren Beach, Arthur Mizener, Dudley Fitts, Delmore Schwartz, Alan Swallow, John Crowe Ransom, and Theodore Spencer. The praises are similar in tenor; so I shall quote only one, and the shortest, which is Ransom's: "He has an angel's velocity and range with language."

If one were inclined to use the critical technique which Jarrell himself habitually employs, the technique of explosive epigram and Menckenesque ridicule, I believe that one could, between the poems and the comments on the jacket, write a fairly entertaining essay. But it seems to me more profitable to drop the subject.

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John Berryman has at least in a limited degree the gift for language which Jarrell lacks, but it is frustrated by his inability to define his theme and his disinclination to understand and discipline his emotions. Most of his poems appear to deal with a single all-inclusive topic: the desperate chaos, social, religious, philosophical, and psychological, of modern life, and the corresponding chaos and desperation of John Berryman. No matter what the ostensible subject, this is commonly what emerges, and most of the poems are merely random assortments of half-realized images illustrating this theme. It is hard to tell one poem from another; the poems blur together in memory; and much of the time the passages from different poems could be interchanged with no great change of effect. The loose monotony is increased by the fact that most of the poems are in the same meter, a somewhat loose iambic pentameter, which displays no real organization of lines into varying rhythmic and rhetorical units, but moves heavily line by line in a manner which comes to seem interminable. The rhythm is not quite the same as that employed by MacLeish, but the effect of disorganization and monotony reminds one of MacLeish:

*The Irish and the Italians own the place.*
*Anyone owns it, if you like, who has*
*A dollar minimum; but it is theirs by noise.*
*Let them possess it until one o'clock,*
*The balconies' tiers, huddled tables, shrouded baleful music,*
*and the widening crack*
*Across the far wall watching a doomed crowd,*
*The fat girl simpering carnations to the boys.*

This sort of thing if continued very long is both dull and benumbing; and it benumbs the poet, for moving in this undefined rhythmic fog, and feeling impelled to enumerate all the horrors of the cosmos, he realizes few of his details and does not know where to stop.

Berryman's most notable attempt at organization is perhaps the piece entitled *Chinese Checkers;* but so far as I can understand the poem, the organization is largely factitious. The game is perhaps symbolic of an intellectual or professional pursuit which fails to engage most of the author's interests and faculties; or perhaps it is symbolic of something else; or perhaps it is not symbolic. The game, however, provides the frailest possible continuity. The poem starts with it, refers to it a few times, and returns to it (though I find the figure of the game in the last stanza very difficult to grasp); but for the rest the poet lets his mind wander as freely over his past experience as it wanders in any of the other poems, and most of the experience in question is quite irrelevant to the game.

One finds passages in a few poems which indicate a sharper talent: lines in *Cloud and Flame* for example, and the third stanza of *Letter to His Brother,*

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although both of these poems are pretty heavily influenced by Yeats. I will quote one short poem entire; it is called *Parting as Descent*:

*The sun rushed up the sky; the taxi flew;*
*There was a kind of fever on the clock*
*That morning. We arrived at Waterloo*
*With time to spare and couldn't find my track.*

*The bitter coffee in a small café*
*Gave us our conversation. When the train*
*Began to move, I saw you turn away*
*And vanish, and the vessels in my brain*

*Burst, the train roared, the other travellers*
*In flames leapt, burning on the tilted air*
*Che si cruccia, I heard the devils curse*
*And shriek with joy in that place beyond prayer.*

The first two stanzas of this poem are sharp, self-contained, and admirable; in the third stanza, where Berryman endeavors to rise to a climax of emotion, he loses control of his style, and indulges in stereotypes as bad as anything in Jarrell. If Berryman could learn to think more and feel less, and to mitigate, in some fashion, his infinite compassion for himself and for the universe, he might bring to some kind of real fruition the talent which one can discern in his better lines; but until he does so, he will not be a poet of any real importance.

J. V. Cunningham is a man who began as a Catholic and who in the process of losing his faith acquired a good deal of philosophical erudition and a restless yet uncompromising mind. Of his original faith he retained, as nearly as I can discover, only a few metaphysical convictions, and those of a type which offer more certitude than consolation. I do not share all of his convictions, and I hold a few convictions which he does not share; yet it seems to me certain that his mind is more lucid, more sure of its own contents, and more profoundly "modern" (if we must have such a mind) than that of anyone else writing poetry today, and it seems to me equally certain that he is more surely a master of his craft, within the forms which he has used, than is any other poet writing today. I quote a poem entitled *Meditation on Statistical Method*:

*Plato, despair!*
*We prove by norms*
*How numbers bear*
*Empiric forms,*

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*How random wrong*
*Will average right*
*If time be long*
*And error slight,*

*But in our hearts*
*Hyperbole*
*Curves and departs*
*To infinity.*

*Error is boundless.*
*Nor hope nor doubt,*
*Though both be groundless,*
*Will average out.*

This is not, as I have known occasional readers to think it, a piece of neat light verse. It is a serious comment on a major topic; intellectually, it is absolutely lucid; and it exhibits that combination of passion and irony which is supposed in our time to be essential. In my opinion (and I believe in Cunningham's) passion can get along without irony quite as well as with it, though not without intelligence. However, passion, irony, and intelligence are all present in this poem, and are beautifully related to each other. My second quotation is an epigram entitled *On the Calculus*:

*From almost naught to almost all I flee,*
*And* almost *has almost confounded me,*
*Zero my limit, and infinity.*

And my third and final quotation is an untitled epigram, the last piece in the book:

*In whose will is our peace? Thou happiness,*
*Thou ghostly promise, to thee I confess*
*Neither in thine nor love's nor in that form*
*Disquiet hints at have I yet been warm;*
*And if I rest not till I rest in thee*
*Cold as thy grace, whose hand shall comfort me?*

These three poems, and fifteen or eighteen equally fine in Cunningham's two books, will not appeal to those who consider poetry to be a "revery over remembered sensory impressions." Neither will they appeal to those who share what is popularly regarded as the modern temperament and who have little experience with the modern (or any other) mind. These are not the work of an unhappy adolescent; they are the work of a mature scholar, thinker, and craftsman. And I believe that they will stand the most rigorous comparison with the finest short poems in English.

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# *The ILIAD*

*DUDLEY FITTS*

ON THE ILIAD, by *Rachel Bespaloff*. Pantheon. $2.50.
THE ILIAD, OR, THE POEM OF FORCE, by *Simone Weil*. Politics. 25 cents.
THE STORY OF THE ILIAD, by *E. T. Owen*. Oxford. $3.25.

ONE HAS NO DESIRE TO PLAY AT CERBERUS, standing guard at the gate of Hellenism to make sure that none but the respectably dead pass in. On the contrary: so few are the applicants these days that the frilliest enticements seem hardly out of order, and it is exceedingly difficult to know where to discriminate. The Homeric poems have attracted eccentrics enough in the past—some very brilliant and almost persuasive eccentrics, too—; and if we give a hearing to the enthusiast who can prove that Nausikaa and Kassandra collaborated to write the *Odyssey*, that Menelaos was historically a princess of the Amazons, or that 'Homer' was actually a Phthian syndicate manipulated for his own sinister ends by Minos of Crete, it is hard to see why we should not entertain Mme. Bespaloff. She is, from my point of view, an eccentric; if *On the Iliad* is characteristic of her, she is a misty-minded eccentric; she has none of Mlle. Weil's clarity and little of Mr. Owen's patience with text of the poem. Yet she belongs here. The important thing is that the *Iliad* be discussed with sufficient vivacity to draw the attention of as many persons as possible. If, as it has been conjectured, it is better to write badly about Homer than to write well about Sartre, the reason is that the *Iliad*, like the Gospels, is a *specimen salutis*.

*On the Iliad* is a series of seven mystical meditations on the heroic theme, tending towards a *rapprochement* between the *Iliad* and the Bible on the one hand, and Homer and the Tolstoy of *War and Peace* on the other. The method is fragmentary, or perhaps I should say dissociative: the poem is not used as a narrative entity, but as material for the construction of a series of spring-boards for plunges into speculation. The most successful of these plunges are the first two, brief but sensitive and penetrating analyses of Hector, and of Achillês and his mother Thetis. Good, in its rather over-emotional way, is the *temacon-variazioni* meditation on the meeting between Priam and Achillês: understandably enough, for since this is one of the profoundest moments in the greatest poem in European literature, the contemplator must be lost

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indeed who is not somehow lifted above himself by it. It is when Mme. Bespaloff is concerned with the springs and motives of character that she is at her best. It is in her philosophizing that I find her hard to follow and to bear. The game of moral correspondences—e.g., prove that Kalypso is the spiritual sister of Dixie Dugan—presents opportunities for paradox and virtuosity; but, like the rhetorical exercises so dear to the scholars of Alexandria—e.g., 'What the Trojan Horse might have said to Pasiphaê's Wooden Cow'—it becomes unrewarding in proportion to the cleverness of the correspondence. Mme. Bespaloff is nothing if not clever.

I find statements that seem to me curious, to say the least. A typical, and relatively lucid, passage may be briefly examined. Speaking of Homer and the tragic poets, she writes:

> Clytemnestra, Orestes and Oedipus are their crimes; they have no existence outside them. Later on, the philosophers, heirs of Odysseus, introduce the Trojan horse of dialectic into the realm of tragedy. Error takes the place of the tragic fault, and the responsibility for it rests with the individual alone. With Homer, punishment and expiation have the opposite effect; far from fixing the responsibility, they dissolve it in the vast sea of human suffering and the diffuse guilt of the life-process itself. A flaw in a defective universe is not quite the same thing as a sin; remorse and grace have not made their appearance . . .

The first sentence is unexceptionable. The second is epigramatically effective, but I wonder if it is not too easy: the great *párodos* of the *Agamemnon,* to cite only one example, would appear to contradict it. The third sentence if I understand it correctly, looks dubious in the light of the same play, indeed, of the whole *Oresteia;* for who could exemplify Error more positively than those great agonists (I am willing to except Orestês), even when one concedes that their houses were damned? How is it possible to find here anything similar to the doctrine of Original Sin? The fourth sentence is a rhetorical flourish of beautifully undefined terms; but I would say that the responsibility is fixed, and with terrible precision. And the remark that Homer and the tragic poets knew nothing of Sin and Remorse and Grace makes me wonder how Mme. Bespaloff reads the *éxodos* of *Oedipus Rex* and the Messenger's description, so full of the grace of God, of the blind exile's death—or, better, Assumption—in *Oedipus Coloneus.*

*On the Iliad* is furnished with an entertaining and largely irrelevant introduction by Hermann Broch, and the whole thing has been handsomely translated by Miss Mary McCarthy.

At first blush it would seem that Mlle. Weil's pamphlet is another essay in the Bespaloff manner, for she too has her *mystique,* she too enjoys correspondences, she too moves from Homer to the teachings of Jesus. Actually there is a world of difference between the two studies. For one thing, Mlle.

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Weil is firmly based: whereas Mme. Bespaloff is misty and uncertain, allusive. In her treatment of the poem, Mlle. Weil keeps it always, in total clarity, before her eyes. One is never very far from the text. For another thing, she writes unpretentiously and with clear intention. She is concerned with Force, with its annihilating effect both on the conquered and on the conqueror (the essay was composed in the summer and fall of 1940, after the fall of France), and she shows that this concept of Force is in essence the Greek concept of *hybris* and consequent *némesis*, a theory that is at the very heart of Greek thought. So Polykratês, in Herodotos, damned by his unvarying good luck; so Hector, alone beyond the Skaian gate: 'And now my own rashness has destroyed my own city,' since Hector in his arrogance had rejected the sober advice of Polydamas that the defeated Greeks be allowed to withdraw from Ilion; so Achillês, wantonly destroying the boy Lykaon and insulting the very gods by his mutilation of the corpse of Hector; so Kreon, at the end of *Antigonê*:

> Lead me away. I have been rash and foolish.
> I have killed my son and my wife.
> I look for comfort; my comfort lies here dead.
> Whatever my hands have touched has come to nothing.
> Fate has brought all my pride to a thought of dust.

Fate, yes; but the man can choose. The important words here are 'rash,' 'foolish,' and 'pride'; it is her preoccupation with *Amor Fati* that leads Mme. Bespaloff to pass over, even to deny, the sin of Pride, the selfdestroying *hybris*. For Mlle. Weil, it is everything: the heroes, Hector, Patroclos, Achillês —each in his turn is destroyed by it. Moreover, whole nations can die of it: it is the Hebrew and the Roman who represent Force:

> Throughout twenty centuries of Christianity, the Romans and the Hebrews have been admired, read, imitated, both in deed and word; their masterpieces have yielded an appropriate quotation every time anybody had a crime he wanted to justify;

and it is from the Greek epic and the Gospels, instinct with love and justice, that man must learn 'not to admire force, not to hate the enemy, nor to scorn the unfortunate.' This seems strange when one considers the shocking violence of the *Iliad*—more shocking, certainly, than anything contrived by Jehovah—; yet I think that Mlle. Weil is correct in her contention that the moral implications of the poem are what she says they are. Naturally Homer was not preaching homilies; naturally his battles, his duels, his frightful accounts of cruelties and mutilations, went to make a good story for an audience that loved that kind of fare (as do we today); but it is equally true that in what might be called the philosophical episodes a piety not unlike the Christian is to be discerned. Hector's parting from Andromachê, Priam's meeting with Achillês, and, less direct but perhaps most convincing of all,

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Achillês's curious reply to young Lykaon's plea for mercy: 'Die, friend. Why are you crying so? Patroclos died, a better man than you. And look at me, brave and strong, my father a brave man too and my mother a goddess: yet fate and death close in upon me, the day will come. . . .' —in these passages the horror of violence is not only perceived and exposed, but transcended as well. The poem would be intolerable, as Mlle. Weil says, but for these 'note[s] of incurable bitterness,' 'this bitterness that proceeds from tenderness and that spreads over the whole human race, impartial as sunlight.' It is not difficult to understand, in the light of this interpretation, why Mlle. Weil believed that 'nothing the peoples of Europe have produced is worth the first known poem that appeared among them,' and why she found in the *Iliad* a morality comparable to the morality of Jesus and urgently needed by us in our *cultus* of Force.

Again Miss McCarthy has made a vigorous and lucid translation from the French, although I can not help taking exception to her handling of the quotations from Homer: these are presented in a sprawlingly formless line-for-line un-verse, ugly alike to the eye and the ear. Nor are they always accurately rendered, although this seems to be the fault rather of Mr. Dwight Macdonald. At any rate, the most serious blunder, 'Pythia' for 'Phthia' in the lament of Briseïs over Patroclos, should be amended in future reprints. And it would be well, in view of the humility and generosity of Mlle. Weil's spirit, that these reprints drop the cheap sneer in the biographical note: 'It is hardly necessary to add that her transcendental concept of Christianity had nothing in common with the various business enterprises which go under that name.' With these reservations, *The Iliad, or, The Poem of Force* is strongly recommended.

Mr. Owen is Professor of Greek at University College in the University of Toronto, and I should have liked to sit under him. His volume is straight literary criticism, with mystical and moral speculation reduced to a minimum; a book by book investigation of the machinery of the *Iliad*, the means by which so mighty an effect was achieved. To readers who are skittish of pedantry and pedants, who dislike textual explication ('dissection is murder'), I can say only that they have nothing to dread here. Mr. Owen is detailed and thoroughgoing in his analysis, but he writes with appreciation, humanity, and a saving wit. He is especially good in his demonstration of the over-all pattern of the poem, the impressive way in which earlier speeches and events are echoed, as it were musically, as the narrative proceeds. The *Iliad* has frequently been criticised as being awkward, incoherent; he proves that it is not, that episodes which have been condemned as interpolations or examples of 'Aliquando dormitat bonus Homerus' are psychologically and dramatically right. ('These interpolators,' he remarks in a dry aside, 'certainly had a great

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sense of style.') The notorious catalogue of sea-nymphs in XVIII is a case in point, and Mr. Owen's comment upon it is typical of his manner:

> It is, to my mind, a stroke of perfect poetic judgment; a list of lovely names that by almost nothing but lovely sounds conjure up a lovely scene, comes to heal the pain. It is just the relief and release of feeling that was needed; the strain of thought is for the moment completely lifted, and the mind finds rest and refreshment in sheer beauty that requires not the slightest effort to apprehend it.

Here is no great criticism, surely, and no particular distinction of expression (as a matter of fact, 'lovely' tends to cloy); it is a just and illuminating observation, quietly stated, and the interpolators fade away like Creüsa's ghost, *ceu fumus in vento.* And so the commentary runs, intelligent and perceptive, and one is back in Homer again, following the text, unravelling the closely woven texture of the poem, with never a theosophical plunge to distract one. A good book.

# *A Survey of Criticism*

*HOWARD NEMEROV*

THE ARMED VISION, A Study in the Methods of Modern Literary Criticism, by *Stanley Edgar Hyman.* Knopf. $5.00.

*Ola! silenzio, silenzio, silenzio! io son qui per giudicar.*—da Ponte.

THIS IS A BOOK OF information and criticism. The received opinion about reviewing such books, if I may generalize from contemporary practice, seems to be that the reviewer who *knows more* than the author, requires the book merely as a stimulus and as a means of directing his attention to the area of discourse under survey, whereupon his qualifications by some miraculous means far exceed those of the author; his function then, still according to contemporary practice, is to inform the public and the author of those things the author did which he should not have done, of those things he did not do which he should have done, and of those things which he did and did badly—the reviewer plays the trump of that small learning he can add to the author's large learning and takes the trick; or, as in the parable of the flea and the elephant, he sits in the author's ear and says to him, "We sure shook that

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bridge." Having done these things the reviewer, if he doesn't much like the book, is at liberty to make a nasty remark about its thesis if any (whereupon the rules of the game allow the sentence, "Space does not permit me to go into my reasons," etc., or one of its many recognized variants) and then—something that is hardly licensed except in a review—to denigrate The Style, that is, to make use of the wonderful and meaningless conception, left over from a school of polite editorial prose and inherited for some reason by criticism instead of by schools of business English, that Good Writing is Good Writing no matter what. Then the reviewer may go home, having in a manner *written* the book by symbolically triumphing over it.

Having said so much, I recognize how difficult it will be to avoid making the best, or worst, of these public conveniences (as they may be called), which are as attractive as they ought to be reprehensible: they allow the reviewer to evade his proper work, and not only so but seem to congratulate him for it; they suggest, without demonstrating, his qualifications for evaluating the work; they discount what may be in some cases the sole meritorious feature of the work, the effort, learning, study, that have gone to composing it; further they make for a tone of contempt designed to show that the reviewer is a superior person who here labors with the left hand.

But any apology this suggests should be taken in a limited and technical sense: honesty and dishonesty may avail themselves about equally of any device; my elders and betters have shown me no very good model for the tone and manners of a review (Mr. Hyman himself being as a reviewer no less querulous and ill-tempered than many among us: see *Accent,* Spring 1948); we do not in these things love the sinner while hating his sin: rather the reverse.

On the one hand I have not the deep and extensive learning Mr. Hyman has. He has read far more than I have, and studied his subject with greater intensity and for a much longer time; where he modestly disclaims sufficient knowledge for a discussion of physics, I as modestly disclaim sufficient knowledge to understand his disclaimer. On the other hand I find myself unable to agree with Mr. Hyman in what seems to me his major intention, the establishment of a 'collective criticism,' and in many places unable to admire the tone and manners of his book. I shall try as best I can to reason out the nature of my discontents in what follows, in part two describing the plan and procedure of *The Armed Vision* and speaking mostly of particulars, in part three describing what I conceive to be the kind, the intention and the result of the book, and advancing my more general differences.

It is with some shame I note that I propose doing exactly what Mr. Hyman's publisher has confidently predicted I (or another, or many others) will be doing: "a book," he says on the dust-jacket, "over which rivers of

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ink will eventually be spilled." Whether this is intended literally or as a trope is not a hard judgment, but if we apply Mr. Hyman's critical method we emerge with the suggestion that the id of at least a hired blurb-writer has not too obscurely had its revenge.

II

Mr. Hyman intends first of all a critical description of modern literary criticism, which he defines "crudely and somewhat inaccurately" as "*the organized use of non-literary techniques and bodies of knowledge to obtain insights into literature.*" He cites John Crowe Ransom to the effect that "ours is an age of more than usual critical distinction," but, he says, "We cannot flatter ourselves that the superiority lies in the caliber of our critics as opposed to their predecessors. Clearly it lies in their methods." So far as this takes us, it is rather 'armament' than 'vision' that is to be described, yet the author includes both by treating single authors as exemplary of dominant emphases in method, as his chapter headings indicate, which it will be convenient to list here as showing the outline of the work: an introduction on the nature and ancestry of modern literary criticism; Edmund Wilson and Translation in Criticism; Yvor Winters and Evaluation in Criticism; T. S. Eliot and Tradition in Criticism; Van Wyck Brooks and Biographical Criticism; Constance Rourke and Folk Criticism; Maud Bodkin and Psychological Criticism; Christopher Caudwell and Marxist Criticism; Caroline Spurgeon and Scholarship in Criticism; R. P. Blackmur and the Expense of Criticism; William Empson and Categorical Criticism; I. A. Richards and the Criticism of Interpretation; Kenneth Burke and the Criticism of Symbolic Action; a conclusion, Attempts at an Integration, composed of two parts, The Ideal Critic and The Actual Critic.

If this organization is factitious (like another) Mr. Hyman does nevertheless a persuasive job of definition and arrangement. Within a chapter he follows, with few variations, a quite intricate pattern treating these factors: a general discussion of the method as employed by the critic who serves as its illustration; a brief outline of that critic's work; a more detailed study of one or more of his major works; a survey of his ancestry in the method; of certain contemporaries who also use this method in one or another variation; a detailed (and often zestful) appreciation of the critic's faults, failings, with, in special instances, a little account of what social and sexual inadequacies and peculiarities are supposed by Mr. Hyman to 'underlie' and 'explain' the critic's professional work.

We have then (to exclude for the moment the introduction and conclusion) twelve chapters equating men and methods; the arrangement seems to be into an ascending scale of approval not chapter by chapter but into three groups:

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Wilson, Winters, Eliot, Van Wyck Brooks, who are on the whole bad; Rourke, Bodkin, Caudwell, Spurgeon, who are on the whole interesting; Blackmur, Empson, Richards, Burke, who are good. I consider that Mr. Hyman is at his best in dealing with people he likes, for he has less incentive to discuss them as problems in personality and thus more time for their work. His essays on Mr. Blackmur and Mr. Burke seem to me ordered and lucid and full of understanding. Where he is offended he has the habit of letting the great axe fall (he notes as one of Mr. Blackmur's weaknesses "an excess of charity to his colleagues"), sometimes with justice and sometimes on his own foot; for controversial ill-temper he has substituted a good-humored and superior, though nonetheless tendentious, predilection for epigrams, and I do not see that these, whether they be wicked or coy, do much for criticism. Edmund Wilson has "written his own obituary so effectively that it would be presumptuous for anyone else to kill him off." Van Wyck Brooks is "a narrow and embittered old gentleman with a white moustache." The tone of Mr. Hyman's scorn, in these first chapters at any rate, is too obviously triumphal, and his opinion of Van Wyck Brooks would seem to make the twenty or so pages spent on demolition a matter rather of pleasure than necessity, while the long attack on Edmund Wilson seems to me a buffoonery and an impertinence.

Mr. Hyman's own methods are many, changing with the job at hand. In his critical mood he owes most to Kenneth Burke, but because of the surprising number of his duties in this volume he is not often in that mood. He is by occasion a bibliographer, a scholar, a historian, a man who knows all there is to know about. . . . His best vein, I think, is the one he distinguishes as belonging to Edmund Wilson: he is a popularizer, an introductory critic, a 'translator'; he gives the 'plots' of critical works and excels at concise abstraction and summary of relevant material from voluminous sources. He is also a pedant: "Almost the parody of literary genealogy," he remarks, "is found in the work of an American critic, Joseph Warren Beach," and gives his evidence: Beach has professed to find as influences on Dos Passos "*Ulysses*, Dorothy Richardson, Virginia Woolf, *The Waste Land*, Sandburg, Jules Romains," etc. etc.—a sufficiently ridiculous list, of which Mr. Hyman says, "By this point traditionalism has come a long way." In Mr. Hyman's own judgments it sometimes comes at least an equal distance: the statement that "Wilson's work is traditional in a sense that most contemporary criticism is not" evokes a tradition including Anaxagoras, Anaximander, Stesimbrotus, Glaucus (or Glaucon), Philo Judaeus, S. Augustine, Fulgentius, etc. etc. And while with I. A. Richards he sneers affably enough at "those godlike lords of the syllabus-world, who think that the whole of English Literature can be perused with profit in about a year," his own tempo, especially when dealing

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with minor authors, has occasionally the speed and terse urgency of the *Outline History* series.

Mr. Hyman has in fact an unhappy gift for pardoning easily in himself what he will by no means pardon in others. Thus he says, "instead of discussing the poem, Wilson reprinted Roger Fry's commentary, surely an unequaled job of shirking in a professional critic." (We are still, I suppose, at liberty to suggest that Mr. Wilson thought Fry had done a good job). But presently we find Mr. Hyman recommending that "it is about time someone polished off the term 'escape' as a critical concept," and doing it by quoting passages from F. O. Matthiessen and Kenneth Burke published in 1935. And in saying that Yvor Winters' treatment of Henry James "is one of the most completely inadequate in critical writing of our time" is not he doing precisely what he objects to in Mr. Winters? that is, making statements which, whether they are so or not, are not supported in the text. Finally, this ambiguous behavior is erected into a principle of method: "It is always worth doing, as a kind of ultimate test, to turn a man's critical method on himself, his own life and work." This ultimate test issues, so far as I can make out, in a biographical sneer or a pretty compliment. Mr. Hyman is extremely fond of taking statements from the work and applying them to the life, and he seems rather pleased than surprised at being able to record of Mr. Eliot, "The personality that emerges finally is not, as we should expect, that of the triumphant great artist who has achieved, in the *Quartets*, one of the authentic masterpieces of our time, but that of a sick, defeated and suffering man." It may be worth noting in general that whom Mr. Hyman spews out and condemns seem all to have relapsed into the same heretical malady of nerve, being either sick and defeated and suffering or bitter or the victims of "'a patent and rather frightening insecurity." I suspect that the old despised charge of 'escapism' is, for all the exhortations to reform, still doing business at the same stand. What constitutes Mr. Hyman's predisposition to this kind of judgment is not always clear, but vaguely discernible behind the reproach that Edmund Wilson "seems entirely lacking in either humor or human warmth," and unequivocally visible in the statement that Parrington's book "created perhaps the first rounded progressive-democratic-social tradition for American writers to match the reactionary-aristocratic-religious tradition of Eliot, Ransom, Winters, et al." These are key-words in Mr. Hyman's war, and there is about their distinctions not only a clear invitation to choose sides but also a description of the reader whose agreement Mr. Hyman perfectly assumes, and to whom I believe he is addressing himself.

A similar "rounded progressive-democratic-social" emphasis and approval characterize Mr. Hyman's conclusions. I will not discuss "The Ideal Critic" since I am able to agree with Mr. Hyman that this personage "is of course

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nonsense" though not so readily that he is "perhaps useful nonsense as a Platonic archetype." But Mr. Hyman's recommendations to "actual" critics must certainly be put down in part at least.

> With the tremendous growth of the social sciences in particular, sooner or later knowing enough of any one of them to turn it fruitfully on literature will demand a life study, leaving no time for anything else except some acquaintance with the corpus of literature itself.

I am grateful there will be time for some acquaintance. Again,

> A new magazine, calling itself the *Critic* or the *Symposium*, devoted to a detailed collective study of a man or a book or a poem in each issue, acquiring and training a body of specialist critics capable of doing the things it wanted done . . . could solve some of these problems . . .

Parturiunt montes, nascitur another magazine.

## III

Having come this far I must ask, Why *The Armed Vision?* Here is a work which, whatever I may conceive to be its particular failings with respect to tone and various technical factors, is a learned account of modern literary criticism, together with some conclusions and suggestions about the future and possible organization of this field. I suppose my question to comprise the following divisions: what kind of book this is, and what it has to do with criticism; whether criticism is 'autotelic' or (Blackmur) 'self-sufficient but by no means isolated'; whether it ought to be; for whom this book is designed; what kind of use different sorts of reader will make of it.

*The Armed Vision,* though not alphabetically arranged, is encyclopedic, a reference-book (the index is more than a twentieth the length of the text); it contains a selective bibliography which would prove of great assistance to any person, however educated, purposing the study of modern criticism. It is a history not only of a period (the past twenty-five years) but of traditions which, its author contends, go back a considerable time. It is a critical work, inasmuch as it describes with intent to evaluate; it is a scientific work, of a sociological sort, inasmuch as it proposes controls, coordinations, integrations which would 'bureaucratize' method into methodology and make the kind of knowledge offered by criticism verifiable by experiment that would, ideally, free itself from the personality of the observer. At last it is recognizably a text-book, and certainly the most complete (if not, indeed, the only one) in its field.

What *The Armed Vision* has to do with literary criticism? This: it shows that criticism is going, and proposes that it ought to keep going, away from 'experience' and towards 'knowledge.' This distinction (whose terms seem to be mine and none of Mr. Hyman's) would be merely ludicrous if its

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possibilities were limited, but as they are not it describes a real dilemma: naturally experience of a poem and knowledge of it are likely even in the crudest reading to share common ground, and in a good reading they would be as nearly as possible one. But as criticism becomes a science, a "detailed collective study" by "a body of specialist critics" intent on solving "problems," it becomes by so much a means to knowledge, and the work it studies is no longer an experience because it has no experiencing subject (unless the body of specialist critics in full Sorbonne should literally incorporate itself). It is a difficult choice, then: either you read the poem, and like it or dislike it, and reason out however partially and inadequately why, or you interest yourself in 'knowledge' and it is right for you to hire an academy which will tabulate the results of the poem for psychology, sociology, botany, history, religion, etc. And a further effect of *The Armed Vision* on criticism is to make the subject educationally legitimate and viable.

"In actual practice," Mr. Hyman writes, "modern criticism has been at once completely autotelic and inextricably tied to poetry. That is, like any criticism, it guides, nourishes, and lives off art and is thus, from another point of view, a handmaiden to art, parasitic at worst and symbiotic at best." Mr. Eliot is rebuked for calling the assumption "preposterous" that criticism is an autotelic art, and I can see indeed that according to present practice the assumption is not preposterous; so many essays in our journals give the impression, and Mr. Hyman's own proposals also seem to suggest, that the destruction unto oblivion of all the art that has ever been would leave criticism staggered perhaps, but milling bravely around all the same.

Whether criticism should be autotelic, or self-sufficient but by no means isolated? The answer, probably, is if it amuses the critic. It has been sufficiently admitted that criticism requires poetry as an occasion at least, but no one has quite said whether it requires good poetry, and in effect that judgment is one that criticism finds itself less than ever able to make or interested in making. If poetry is to be considered mainly in symposium as a means rather to knowledge than experience, I do not see that bad poetry (ah, these outworn and traditional terms) is any less qualified than good, for the Gallup poll of sociologists, the show of hands at the faculty meeting. Mr. Mark Van Doren is severely rated by our author for "the most complete and eloquent attack on modern criticism with which I am familiar." Mr. Van Doren was "eloquent" and, in his melancholy, impassioned, and it may be that he did exercise "a pure obscurantism"; I have affiliations with Mr. Hyman's side of the question but am somewhat impatient of his impatience. And I think it not impossible that Mr. Van Doren was right in saying "'Poetry itself can do with silence for a while." It is a kind of criticism which has not recently been tried. But if poetry can do with silence, criticism cannot.

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At last, who is to read this work, and what is he to read it for? Do we envision the tired businessman getting around the problem of 'modern poetry' by reading a highly rational account of what some people have said about it? Or the undergraduate, cramming for that quiz on the fallacy of expressive form? Or the graduate student, for whose proposed teaching career the book may represent almost the entire critical equipment? Or perhaps the full professor, whose relations with modern criticism will not run to marriage but may include this brief liaison? For if you haven't read the major texts with which the book works you are reading a popularization, of a very educational sort, of course (somehow these doctrines are always considerably easier in Mr. Hyman's version than in the originals, where the train of thought is always being interrupted by the consideration of a poem); if you have read them and studied them you may be charmed with Mr. Hyman or alarmed at him—according, that is, as you are a progressive positivist or a reactionary obscurantist—but you will probably not be instructed by him.

Finally it must be, I suppose, the undergraduate. Modern criticism is unmistakably in business and the tigers of wrath will eat the dung of the horses of instruction. Mr. Hyman with his advanced survey course seems to be on the winning side.

## *The Politics of Exclusion*

*R. W. FLINT*

THE PRINCESS CASAMASSIMA, by *Henry James*. Introduction by *Lionel Trilling*. Macmillan. 2 Vols. $6.00.

WHAT IS THE SECRET of James's extraordinary fullness, the power of persuasion in his art, early and late, that redeems such an equally extraordinary load of uncomfortable mannerism? William Troy, reviewing the *Notebooks*, puts his finger somewhere near it when he quotes James's account of a visit to his sister Alice's grave in Cambridge: "Everything was there, everything *came;* the recognition, stillness, the strangeness, the pity and the sanctity and the terror, the breath-catching passion and the divine relief of tears." When James was moved (and Lionel Trilling suggests that two leading ladies of *The Princess Casamassima*, Rosy Muniment and the fabulous Princess herself, may have been inspired by Alice), everything usually could and did, in some way or other and in spite of a passionate reserve, come.

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Perhaps the best one-word key to what I am after is—commitment. What does that imply for fiction? Firstly and necessarily, an imaginatively, to use James' word, *grasping* nature, with a certain free, generous excess of response; after that, of course, honesty, the "terrible" honesty that Eliot invokes for Blake, no policy at all but an addiction; then, sympathy, or what Lionel Trilling calls "the imagination of love." James had these assets in abundance; in themselves they supply us with our most useful, fructifying native parable of artistic strength. But there was another facet of James's ability to give himself to his work, a further reach of self-surrender in excess of the usual formulae. The life of the artist, James once wrote in a letter, is nothing if not "heroic and sacrificial." In becoming sacrificial it is always more than just the life of the artist. Sacrifice is a kind of martyrdom and martyrdom, willy-nilly, is power of a large and indefinable sort.

The point is worth looking into, I think, because it is the only way we can approach the inviolable ambiguity of the fiction, an ambiguity, Mr. Edmund Wilson to the contrary, as present in the early great "sociological" novels of the '80's, *The Bostonians* and *The Princess Casamassima,* as in the work of his "major phase." This ambiguity is not a program. It is, rather, a unique displacement, as we should say, of the individuality for the sake of power, the refuting power that all fully living art exerts over the half alive.

In his highly suggestive introduction to this timely reprint, Lionel Trilling recounts how James, very early in life, stumbled on the power and oddness of his position: "He (James) dreamed that he was defending himself from an intruder, trying to keep the door shut against a terrible invading form; then suddenly there came 'the great thought that I, in my appalled state, was more appalling than the awful agent, creature, or presence'; whereupon he opened the door and, surpassing the invader for 'straight aggression and dire intention' pursued him down a long corridor in a great storm of lightning and thunder." An image in the mirrror, a monstrosity, even in terms of his father's drawing-room theology, but something real and whole and more "appalling" than anything his life could subsequently array against him.

It may be easier, in the light of the above, to understand the maturity of this earlier and wrongly neglected work. *The Princess Casamassima* takes us over a large portion of the outsider's London, oddly, fastidiously, obliquely, keenly observed, London during the depression of the '80s with its rich resources of human misery and degradation. It appears to be a profounder consideration of social matters than it actually is only because it cleaves so surely to the many-sided truth of what it undertakes. It does not, however, undertake the *whole* of any social question at any time in history. What, then, is that "truth" for James? Nothing more or less, I believe, than the ground-plan of all his fiction, his compulsive, ever-recurrent cycle of exclusion, dis-

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covery, and withdrawal. In this instance his story took him into some frightening areas of modern politics and, since honesty is indivisible, he accurately reproduced what he saw. But the novel will satisfy no one looking for a tract. We do get much of the theatrics of the left wing, the sort of thing that appeals so profoundly to thinkers of Mr. Burnham's stamp, and a good deal, although by no means all, of the psychology. Overlooking the inevitable ironic fussing-about, the sensitive reader will probably be contented with the *quality* of James's insight.

The novel has two main strata, one of which Mr. Trilling has wholly laid bare, the other not. The first has many parabolic uses; Hyacinth Robinson, a "poor little" bookbinder, is the folkish provincial hero who discovers the great world but must finally be sacrificed in double atonement for his superior faith and his superior sensibility. Paul Muniment and the Princess are the reckless and, ultimately, heartless devotees of power, James's remarkable prefiguration of latter-day Stalinism. Hyacinth, for all his professional skill, is not an independent, resourceful person. On the contrary, and here we penetrate to the novel's other stratum, he is a clinging, dependent, affectionate, naturally uxorious nature, and James deprives him of love *by the mere accident of size.* Self-sacrifice, culture, integrity, etc. are all very well, but this is something else again. Hyacinth *cannot* earn the satisfactory love of the people he loves, no matter what he does. Only James and, as we might expect, the two most variously alive people, outside of Hyacinth, in the book, Anastasius Vetch, the weary old bachelor fiddler, and Madame Grandoni, the Princess's companion, love Hyacinth to the end. The novel, therefore, is entirely Jamesian in its strong supporting undertone of sexual anguish. The hero is another of James's Men Who Miss Out, in the tradition of Marcher in *The Beast in the Jungle* and Strether in *The Ambassadors*. This is the novel's most baffling ambiguity, and it often makes one forget the political superstructure for the immensity of its pathos. Hyacinth is an Ishmael well enough, victim not only of the timeless dilemma of the man of sensibility from spiritual provinces, but also of the most harrowing sort of frameup on the part of his creator.

James, apparently, wanted his ideal reader to approach him from simple to complex, and he had understandable reasons for thinking well of this venture into a semi-naturalistic style with its echoes of Dickens and Balzac. He kept his London underworld at its distance but it was a removal of choice and not of insensitivity. "The social texture of his work," as Mr. Trilling observes, "is grainy and knotted with practicality and detail." Did James truly "care" for either culture or social justice in the knowing, systematic and fanatical way they are often cared for today? I doubt it. It was his greatness, and the license for his eccentricity, not to have tried to be more than he was, or less.

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# *Five Novels, Three Sexes, and Death*

VERNON YOUNG

CONSPIRATOR, by *Humphrey Slater*. Harcourt, Brace. $2.50.
THE MOOT POINT, by *Peter De Polnay*. Creative Age. $3.00.
THE AUNT'S STORY, by *Patrick White*. Viking Press. $3.00.
UNDER A GLASS BELL and Other Stories, by *Anais Nin*. E. P. Dutton. $3.00.
THE INHERITANCE, by *Allan Seager*. Simon & Schuster. $3.50.

IF ONE WERE ATTEMPTING TO ESTABLISH a reading of contemporary social relationships from these five books, one would feel safe in eliciting the following judgments: that the collective consciousness smells death in advance of the individual consciousness (like the horse that rears at an explosion long before his rider hears it) and the individual, without 'knowing' why, breaks down in ways determined by his own idiosyncratic heritage; that the public life is so debased a currency that the private mind, forced to mint its own values, makes a virtue of self-destruction; that the battle of the sexes barely deserves so active a title since, increasingly, the sexes are insufficiently proximate for conflict—as a result, inversion, and even insanity, comes to be held as sacred.

These novels were not deliberately chosen to illustrate such a crisis; they simply do so, with varying degrees of comprehension, with varying degrees of literary honesty. Despite their several departures and their ostensible pledges, they all testify to a world of foundered relationships and lost goals. Not simply in their general implications but in their precise recordings of the personal dilemma, there is a pertinent unity of disconnection. A suggestive introduction can be performed before proceeding to the total view of each novelist by reference to the unanimous editing of one subject.

> Until then, in fact, he had assumed she had no views and would not mind one way or the other what he said: now it was evident he would have to take more care. For a moment he almost regretted having married: it certainly made everything more complicated. Again he told himself it would have been better if he had consulted the Party before endangering the whole future of his important work. (*Conspirator*)
>
> It was not love. Huntly Clarkson had loved as far as he was capable, and finished. Love and Theodora Goodman were, besides, grotesque, unless you were prepared to explore subtler variations of emotion than he personally would care for. (*The Aunt's Story*)

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> The following morning he thought they would part, but she stuck to him. Fundamentally, it didn't matter to him one way or the other. (*The Moot Point*)
>
> There is no delight or joy in their sensual contact. It is a creeping together into a womb. . . . In the dark caverns of their whisperings, confidences, timidities, what they now elaborate is a stalactitic world shut out from light and air. (Hejda—*Under A Glass Bell*)
>
> The act itself was not what he had imagined for nobody had told him that good intentions did not necessarily confer ecstasy. He was vaguely disappointed as if he had at last seen through a gigantic conspiracy. . . . They were now technically lovers but their intimacy had brought them nothing but itself. (*The Inheritance*)

The discreteness of the sexes is not, except in Anais Nin's book, the foreground subject of any of these novels, yet it is unquestionably the most striking feature that they commonly project and seems to be so taken for granted as the foundation of the present emotional scheme that one suspects the separate writers are not fully aware of the enormity of this alienation. To extract the findings on this basic theme (temporarily bypassing other considerations) is to gather sufficient evidence with which to challenge the Kinsey Report as the most misleading and superficial psycho-social investigation of our time. The sexual behaviour of the human male (and female) disclosed by these novelists is no mere titillating exposure of quantitative activity at war with legal sanctions; it is nothing less than the central symbol for the atomizing process of our culture, the most serious symptom of cultural death-wish. (Need I add that I am not offering this arbitrary handful of books as 'scientific' evidence? The novelist, even of humble degree, is concerned with the living actions, not the reported statements, of human intercourse. Compare the tensions portrayed in any contemporary novelist from Raymond Chandler to Katherine Anne Porter. And, especially, see Victor Woolfson's *The Lonely Steeple* and William Maxwell's *The Folded Leaf*, two of the best and the most disregarded recent fictions of the aberrant personality.) The human failure which is the crucial outcome in each of the stories reviewed here grows out of traumatic origins and is sealed by the colossal inability of love or intelligence (with a margin of hope in Seager's book) to achieve unities or to reconstruct coherent possibilities.

*Conspirator*, essentially a thriller with pretensions, involves a coldly fanatical Communist who is faced with the imperative of "liquidating" his "bourgeois" wife. The decision is not, for him, a moral catastrophe; it is an inconvenience. In *The Moot Point*, against the background of an English seaside hotel, inhabited by a grisly assembly of pathetic frustrates, all of whom behave as though sired by Graham Green and jaundice, the young hero, crushed by his own practical uselessness and animated by a kind of depraved pity, slits the

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throat of a deaf-mute girl who faces imprisonment and then kills himself. Theodora Goodman, heroine of *The Aunt's Story,* just wants to belong to herself and, after being rejected by and in turn rejecting the world of conventional reality, finds reason in madness. A similar resolution is arrived at by many of Anais Nin's antagonists and in the long novel of her volume, *Winter of Artifice,* the healing of the fractured feminine ego issues in a poetic vision of the duality of selfhood which is indistinguishable from narcissism. *The Inheritance,* among other things a definitive addition to the line of critical realism (peer, immediately, of *The Great Gatsby, Winesburg, Ohio, Look Homeward, Angel* and *Appointment in Samarra*), has its center of gravity in the "masculine protest" of its small-town Walter Phelps, whose development is all but blighted by his psychical recapitulation of the father.

The tyranny of the parent, either active and actual, or deliberately educed to serve the failing will is, in fact, almost equally omnipresent as the crippling source in each of our cases. The motivations of Humphrey Slater's well-born hero turned Communist are likely to seem obscure if the reader contents himself with the surface action of the story which merely informs him that Desmond Ferneaux-Lightfoot, impersonating upper-class loyalty with a commission in the Grenadier Guards, cultivated political radicalism out of intellectual conviction. But Slater provides one with a clue, so diffidently injected that one almost hesitates to accept it as intentional; Lightfoot's conviction may be a rationalization of the emotional awe he experienced as a child in Ireland, inhaling the romance of rebellion from his beautiful Sinn Fein mother. From this clue, the adventure of Lightfoot, destroyed by the object of his own commitments (a thin version of *Darkness at Noon*), can be read as something other than a political parable. Perhaps what Slater mainly proposed was an exposé of the cold depravity which fills the mind of the political extremist (writing ten years ago he could have chosen a Nazi), but what we infer, if we are curious as to how Lightfoot got that way, is that, losing the mother, he avenges his loss by devotion to a revolutionary cause guaranteed to exclude personal allegiance elsewhere. (And in conspiring from within the British body politic, is not Lightfoot rebelling against the father? One might believe that Slater had been reading Ernest Jones on Ireland's Mother-imagery.) Lightfoot's wife, so goes the text, is a sexual convenience and a potential proselyte. When ordered by Moscow to put her out of the way because she knows too much, the meager extent of his casuistry indicates how thoroughly the political super-ego can be employed to annihilate the individual claim:

> . . . if he refused the instruction he would be expelled from the Party and there would be nothing to make it worth while to go on living. One could not exist for the sake of oneself alone, and the idea of being

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> alive without something less trivial to believe in than one's own little ego was intolerable. Rationally, Desmond could see, there was no problem at all: it was meanly illogical to prefer one insignificant bourgeois person to the historic movement of millions of human beings in every country of the world.

This coldness is preposterous to the point of a joke and one can only accept it on the premise of psychic paralysis. That I have not gone completely outside of the novel to import adequate motivation is assured, I think, by the fact that Slater, himself, uses Freud to stalk Marx, when Lightfoot's ingenuous wife uncovers the meaning of his most sinister performance by consulting a copy of *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life.*

*The Moot Point* has more than its share of dominating parenthood. Eileen Hughes, deaf-and-dumb, has been forcibly detained in her twilight world by a carnivorous mother who has taught her a sign-language no one else on earth can understand. She kills her mother in the vain hope, apparently, of breaking out to the world of common communication and when on the verge of arrest is silenced forever by the weak-kneed John Denton, himself disinherited by a mad father. In addition to these victims, husked by the malice of their parents, there is also an aging celibate whose need for a fat woman is maternal-sexual and an asthmatic widow for whom time stands still while she awaits the visit of her daughter whom she refuses to accept as dead.

The dislocation of identity in Patrick White's Theodora is not so luridly contrived but it is as parentally effected as the calamities of De Polnay's brood. Theodora Goodman's inward odyssey is assisted in its extremity by the gentle and aloof perfection of her father as well as by the efficiently selfish extraversion of her mother and sister. The Nin novelette, *Winter of Artifice,* is an explicit rendering of the undisplaced libido (and the ungirt loin), for Nin's first-person, relentlessly singular, narrator fairly wallows in the details of a father fixation, substituting, with a significant resemblance to Theodora Goodman, music for sexual intercourse. Analysing herself out of bondage to the immediate father she recoils into the Lesbian world of manless felicity. The need of the generic father persists, whereupon she submits herself to the inquisition of The Voice, a psychiatrist in the Hotel Chaotica, whose omnipotence is shattered when he, too, admits desire and anguish. The psychiatrist is but a man, not a saviour, and the entire male principle can be rejected. "It was a father she was looking for, not a lover." (The argument is not conducted with the cut-and-dried progression I have intimated here; I have tried, for the momentary isolation of theme, to highlight the major crises of Nin's curiously protean fiction.)

Allan Seager's novel stands most consciously on ground planted by the enmity of the generations. Whereas Sinclair Lewis's behaviouristic study of

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boobs in Gopher Prairie and Zenith left them pretty much as he found them and the ample idealism of Thomas Wolfe and Sherwood Anderson apotheosized an inarticulate poet under every bush in Asheville or Winesburg, Seager's more clinical scrutiny isolates the chthonic drives through which provincial tyranny is perpetuated. *The Inheritance* opens with a terrifying confrontation of the rapacious old and the gluttonous middle-aged, initiating the note of submerged hatred that accompanies the somatotonic march of the male Phelps, small-town bankers. Brutally insulted in the memory of his hate-breeding father, Todd Phelps reasserts his dignity by knocking down his next-door neighbor. By this action he establishes a precedent of masculine heroism for his boy, Walter, who witnesses the triumph and thereafter feels bound to impose upon himself the destructive simulacrum of Todd. The simulacrum is not disposed of until Walter, after conscientiously assaulting the entire community, realizes, upon beating up his uncle for confining him in an asylum, that he is striking the image of his father.

From even such cursory outlines as I have presented, it can be instantly recognized that behind the strategies of all these novels looms the contribution of the Freudian insight, just as in a comparable group reviewed in the Thirties, when ideological acknowledgment was relevant, probably stood Marx, Veblen, Lincoln Steffens or, rarely, Spengler. The literature of moral anthropology, as I think Erich Kahler might agree to call it, has regained ascendancy over the literature of the class struggle, and before the terror of mind watching its own dissociation the exigencies of political action and planned economy may well appear to pale in importance as viable matter for fiction. This decade has seen the art (and, unfortunately, the 'business') of fiction persistently seeking the public breach in the private fantasy. (Nothing is new under the writing sun. Dostoevsky, Mann, Lawrence, to name the lordly ones, had long ago broken this ground). In so far as a writer steers before a doctrinal wind whose direction he has not accurately sensed, he will achieve a spurious importance through travelling the same route as more important company. Only when he has understood and individually expressed what powers he is enlisting can he hope to produce a book with a literary existence independent of the fashion, while nourished by it.

From this primary, literary standard, Humphrey Slater's novel is trivial. One's doubt as to the degree of inference one is entitled to reflects its most obvious deficiency. One wants Slater to have extended, by the dramaturgy of the action novel, the significance of Lightfoot's loss of ego which, since it fails to justify its humane pretensions, is a reflection of the general modern condition where this same loss urges contempt for the egos of others and culminates in a pitiless liquidation of all emotional resources. I doubt very much that Slater was aware of any such corollary and his book, no matter

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what soaring encomiums grace the jacket, has far less perception of moral evil than, say, *A Coffin for Dimitrios* or *The Big Clock*. Nor can I agree to the narrative brilliance claimed for him; his style is contemptuously unadorned, thoroughly graceless.

Peter De Polnay has, by contrast, a very expert control of the art of story-telling, in the Stevensonian sense, a rich taste for irony and a sharp, surgical steadiness in characterizing. But he wastes his gifts on unworthy involvements, keeping his artistry safe by expending it on a suspense story, so that if the reader finds himself unsatisfied by the mild consequences of the psychology suggested in *The Moot Point*, he may be reassured by the tailored neatness of the plot which makes of the psychology a mere *frisson* for the partly sophisticated. Mr. De Polnay has obviously serious capabilities for pity and power but the residents of his Red House—Nin's Hotel Chaotica made available to the middle class—are simply too ghastly, both in their coloring and their destinies, to entice our sympathies on a more than animal level. (One recalls Orson Welles let loose in the Fun House where evil was a cripple in a hall of mirrors). De Polnay's discernment of the drive towards nullity is not entirely gratuitous; elaborated in a less strictly macabre atmosphere it could subserve the meaning of fiction as well as its form.

In *The Aunt's Story*, meaning and form subserve each other. The extended values they suggest I can only hesitatingly confirm. There is a sustained and dignified sense of tragic defeat in the steady advance of Theodora Goodman into derangement, and many treasures of observation, style and method, on the way. Patrick White has a lyric poet's contempt for the prose order of living and the poet's ability to make reality out of symbol, symbol of reality. He has trained his style to catch texture and to weigh substance, to express stillness and movement and to penetrate, through the offices of dialogue crisp enough to satisfy any realist, the banalities and the secret rivalries of the common mind. It is the uncommon mind, without executive talent adequate to its quality that he favors, of course, and finally, by the persuasiveness of characterization and style, he has invoked a counsel of desperation, made necessary by the ultra-private ego to which the boundaries between the real and the illusory are imperceptible. An imaginary mentor explains the gambit:

> "They will come for you soon, with every sign of the greatest kindness," Holstius said. "They will give you warm drinks, simple, nourishing food, and encourage you to relax in a white room and tell your life. Of course you will not be taken in by any of this, do you hear? But you will submit. It is part of the deference one pays to those who prescribe the reasonable life. They are admirable people really, though limited."

The shock of absurdity? Unlike De Polnay's, manufactured in advance, White's

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absurdity emerges logically from the nature of Theodora Goodman's spiritual captivity and was dictated, one gathers, by a genuinely outraged sensibility. Still, one hesitates to accept dishonesty; preference for the lucidity of madness can be nothing else than consummately dishonest paradox. In spite of White's mollifying blend of appearance and reality, the extraordinary femininity of his perceptions and the lability of his manner, he seems to me to have pulled off a highly artistic stunt. His prose, suggestive of Enid Bagnold or Rosamond Lehmann, as his subject is reminiscent of Virginia Woolf, gets annoyingly precious and, ultimately, one has the bizarre impression of gliding across *marron glacé* on velvet slippers, dancing with a partner who, though supple in every manipulated rhythm, is in reality a beautiful corpse.

Decadence, sometimes of style, mostly of viewpoint, also prevails in the fiction of Anais Nin; the critical vocabulary balks at the very concept, fiction, for has one not been told that Nin's work is drawn from a massive and unending diary? One is morally blackmailed at the start, since, by this entangling alliance, strictly *literary* criticism is almost proscribed. Yet willing publication obviously betokens a measure of artistic objectivity, and republication of Miss Nin's work by E. P. Dutton (formerly it was directed at the cognoscenti in limited editions) removes it from the kindness of the private circle and places it where it is obliged to meet the challenge of a more public analysis.

I believe there is little question that when Anais Nin is writing on her master subject, the interior stresses of the female personality, she has no equal in minute analysis, in conveying the nuances of expectation and withdrawal, the ambivalences of possession and surrender, the delicacies and gaucheries of contact. Better than anyone writing today, she can reveal the psychic essence of the feminine polarity and her revelation, as a consequence of being acutely implicated, arrives at the anxiety proportional to obsessive neurosis. The Female as Female is embraced with such tenderness, such solicitation of her particularity, such a ferocity of defense, that man is necessarily, to the morbid guardian of the woman veiled, the natural enemy—man's inhumanity toward woman is, therefore, the special injustice in the world of Nin. Under this pressure and told with an exquisitely deceptive simplicity is the story "Hejda" in this volume, the purest example of Nin's clairvoyant talent for divulging the tensional forces of incompatibility. This vignette of the Oriental Hejda's unveiling, or rather of her husband's incapacity for making that unveiling fruitful, is the symbol for the heart of Nin's work, around which, if it represented her most passionate conviction, all her finest art would be clustered.

Reading outward from this center, however, one discovers that the agonized privacy of the Nin heroine is endemic and does not indisputably follow upon the violation, by incomprehension, of the male. The objective honesty of

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"Hejda" and "Djuna" is cancelled (this is to say that the protestation of passivity is cancelled) by the confessional in "The Voice" and by various passages in the other stories, many of which emit a distinctly Sapphic odor. Nin's woman does not want man; again and again this decision is ratified by Nin's inability to set in believable motion any male who is not pompous, vain, ill or mad. Nin's Amazons are pursuing themselves: they are sick with their own preciousness, infatuated with their own proportions; writhing together like undulating snakes in a barrel, they attempt to cover their nakedness with the cry, "Woman Agonistes!" They flatter themselves that their breasted uniqueness has been cheated of its natural rights in the reciprocal flow, but in truth their predicament is simply that of infantile regression. With all their tremulous need for the perfect union, for the mutuality that will not rape their integrities, they are moral cowards who have poeticized their limitations; at their best they are autotrophic; at their simplest they are appallingly vain and their hearts belong to Daddy!

Not that Nin's art is solely conscripted to justify the third sex. It is wonderfully deployed to seize the fragmentation of modern city life ("Ragtime" and "The Voice"), to note with compassion in a style that savors and respects its own music the lives broken by fear, by the multitude and by nature ("The Mouse," "The Child Born out of the Fog," "Birth"). Nin's poetic voice, when not choked in the vortex of self-delirium, is plastic and saltatory, lyrically able to define without *explaining;* it constructs a character by evoking his compulsions, the objects of his affection and reference, his attitudes and possessions, as in the masterfully *gestalt* study of the father in the "Djuna" section of *Winter of Artifice.* There, and elsewhere at her strongest, working with her eye on the score, her instrument at full diapason, so to speak, she is unequalled by anyone in this range since D. H. Lawrence and we know we are in the presence of literary genius; when the instrument falters, it squeals like an abused piccolo.

The drastic limitations of her method are explained in this admission of over-compensation:

> His paternal role could be summed up in the one word: criticism. Never an elan of joy, of contentment, of approval. Always sad, exacting, critical, blue eyes. Out of this came her love of ugliness, her effort to see beyond ugliness, always treating the flesh as a mask, as something which never possessed the same shape, color and features as thought. . . . People were made of crystal for her. She could see right through their flesh, through and beyond the structure of their bones. Her eyes stripped them of their defects, their awkwardness, their stuttering. She overlooked the big ears, the frame too small, the hunched back, the wet hands, the web-footed walk. . . . she forgave. . . .

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This is a manifesto of falsification as well as of sympathy—my statement may flush a covey of aesthetic treatises—and in it Nin's dual character as an artist is more than rationalized. She herself (I cannot summon the tact to distinguish her from her Seeing-Eye), clarifies the difficulty she has controlling the exfoliation asserted above:

> Her feelings never deceived her. It was only her imagination which deceived her. Her imagination could give a color, a smell, a beauty to things, even a warmth which her body knew very well to be unreal.
>
> In her head there could be a great deal of acting and many strange things could happen in there. But her emotions were sincere and they revolted, they prevented her from getting lost down the deep corridors of her inventions.

Down these corridors she is all too frequently lost; one turns from passages of emotional fidelity to those in which the imagination has obviously betrayed her. " 'When I went to Lapland,' said Jean, holding an empty opium pipe, 'I found the country of silence. . . .' " (S. J. Perelman slept here!) Jean is a tedious and affected homosexual who has been sulking for years because his mother made him stop playing the violin; but in Nin's transliteration he is an archeologist of the soul, a spiritually autocratic lover, a ship without moorings—"Just before he talked he seemed like a very soft animal, sensitive and porous." In another of these "corridors" she finds a lunatic named Pierre whose introductory challenge goes like this: "You are Beatrice Cenci. Your eyes are too large for a human being." She is apparently noncommittal, and later on: "he leaped away from my eyes and walked into the hothouse. . . . When he reappeared there was the scum of veronal on his lips, and his gestures were slower." Two pages farther, though he hasn't been near that hothouse, the edges of his mouth "were blackened with laudanum."

The unarguable merits of Miss Nin's technique are localized when her phenomena graduate into art with no divorce of judgment from intuition or, as she says herself, feeling from imagination. Failing to retain the correspondence, she parodies the valid principle of surrealism (illogical placement of logical objects) and is ludicrous except to the Pierres, Jeans and Djunas who invariably prefer charades to art, anyway. Her equipment is forever at the mercy of her temperament. Ruthlessly undercutting conventional form with all the compositional daring of Picasso, she risks losing herself down tunnels of artifice in which, lightless and without air, she can envisage those shapes born only of opiate, hallucination and death.

Death haunts prisoners other than those under a glass bell or in the nightside corridors of Hotel Chaotica. In Athens, Ohio, Old Man Ancil Bailey feared death; that is why he spat on Todd Phelps and renewed the blood feud between old and young, between sick and healthy, which Allan Seager traces as the

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cardinal pattern of the human comedy. *The Inheritance*, as I have said, is the story of Walter Phelps, who thought he had to live up to the miraculous proof of his jeering declaration, "My father can lick you!" It is also the story of Eddie Burcham, the boy next door, who grew up under no such dedicated idiocy but developed tuberculosis instead, and while Walter insulted his insurance clients, punched noses, affronted virgins, upset respectable parties and brawled in a hotel room, Eddie lay in a sanatorium and came to the decision that all of us wish for the death of others in order to deny our own mortality. It is the story of a small town and everything that implies in America of mercantile cupidity, marital internment, aridity and envy in the neighborly breast and a smothered, blunted wistfulness. Seager's Athens has a higher status and slightly more complex structure than Plainville, U. S. A., analyzed by Abram Kardiner in *The Psychological Frontiers of Society*, but it bears out the psychologist's generalization of

> the malicious and endless gossip, the general injunction against pleasure seeking, the suppression of free sexual expression, the universal feeling of inferiority, the hatred of progress, the ridicule of education, the low status of women, the paucity of aesthetic interests, the brutal kidding of children, the universality of stinginess. . . .

And by extension, *The Inheritance* is a story about America, not the big abstraction of promise and loss that Thomas Wolfe bayed about with its integration constantly verbalized into a receding future: America here and now, its roots in nineteenth-century puritanism—the small town still its microcosm—guilty and insecure before the prospect of life lived consciously, eager to deny its callowness by sexual 'activity,' social aggrandizement and the swift exploitation of culture.

> (*Eddie*) Pride made him consider himself an intellectual because he came from a town where it was not yet the accepted thing for young men to go to college. The mind was the seat of his being, and, as the mind became the scene, not the originator, of his intellectual life, he did not really expect his mind to serve him.
>
> (*Walter*) . . . lying on his bed scratching the red fur of his chest, smoking a long cigar, thoughtfully wetting his thumb before turning the page, made all the comparisons. If he seemed to be stronger, tougher, braver than the hero, he was pleased. If not, he remembered it was only a fiction or the biographer was very likely partial. Either way, he felt that he had improved the time. It had been a scholarly interlude, pleasurable, and, in the way he had been taught to think of culture, vaguely therapeutic. Mingled with this was the aristocratic assurance that, by his countenance of them for a whole morning, he had encouraged the arts.

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No manifest destiny can be apostrophized for the frigid materialists of Athens; their pioneer past can no longer be felt as a continuum; social reconstruction is hopelessly irrelevant to their instincts, their thinness of intellectual perception and their profound loss of moral bravery. Ed Burcham tells Phelps:

> . . . there is nothing in the way we were brought up that suggests to us anything worth doing except to repeat our fathers' lives, that is, to get money because we have inherited our ancestors' fear of the fever, the wolf, and the Indian hiding at the edge of the woods, and we think we can throw money against them all. We are preparing for a catastrophe that can't happen because the wolves and the Indians are gone. And if we make the grade and get all this money, all we'll do is sit on the porch of the Country Club after we retire and feel cheated, wondering what we did with all our time, resenting the hopes we had that told us once there was something big to do.

Here is that desiccation of the American dream which William Faulkner, mourning its lost vitality (Southern feudal) in the past, interpreted as a nightmare; the spiritual mechanization Dos Passos depicted, in *U. S. A.*, as product of economic contradictions and which John O'Hara finds no meaning for except as a perennial exercise in rancid character study. Seager is not so ambitious in lateral scope as Wolfe or Dos Passos. He is as far from Faulkner's subterranean power as he is from O'Hara's simple brutality. His vision is somewhere between Fitzgerald and Hemingway, suggesting the former's lyric notations and the latter's stoicism. (I expect him to dare wildernesses Hemingway has mapped without exploring.) The affirmative commentary he deduces from the integral development of his novel can best be expressed, I would say, in the belief of the ever-redeemable present in the creative heart and mind. Walter Phelps' realization that in fighting the town he has been shadow-boxing with his dead father and denying his own resources will issue in moral freedom only with the benefits of Ed Burcham's more refined illumination.

> Some kind of full, decent, useful life could be made by anyone anywhere, if he could first conceive of such a life and tried to live it. . . . He [Walter] could break new ground, but where it was old and sour the defects of his family would make him rot. As his friend, it had been his duty to send him away, where, as a surrogate, Eddie recognized with a selfish, shamefaced pleasure, he could attempt the kind of greatness his own sickness denied him.

On this experimental note the book ends. Ed, dying of T.B., has performed the creative act, has wished life for Walter. The question remains whether or not the latter has recovered sufficient independence from fear to remove the dead weight of his background. There is an irony in the fact that the only character in the book with a victoriously humane insight is dying of a

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mortal disease; yet, paradoxically, Seager's chronicle of moribundity does not strand the reader on the marges of death, as each of the other novelists considered here is likely to. The world of things has been staled by the touch of small people but that world is still there and only in that world and with the will to kindness can there be any absolution for the Eddies and the Walters.

Meanwhile, *The Inheritance* is a redemptive deed because Seager has salvaged for this occasion an abundant imagery of daily life and contained it the best way that a novelist can, within a skilful ordonnance of thematic parts. Seager remembers the way people talk, the clothes they wear, the profanity they sport, the pretensions they hide; he kinesthetically embodies the postures of men driving cars, telling dirty jokes, laughing drunkenly behind a window, not heard but seen; he knows the price of bridge chairs in a fraternity house, the meals the middle class eat on Sunday at two and what the meals are served on; he lays open the little hatreds of a City Treasurer with sciatica, the timid lecheries of an egg-filler salesman, the desperate cruelty of a T.B.'s practical jokes and the pathetic boldness, on three drinks, of a twenty-three-year-old girl who knows nothing of the details of sex. And because his hero is a country boy, under the urban make-up applied by his vulgar fraternity, he observes that a dewdrop on a grass-blade turns different colors in the sunlight, automatically registers the first turning of the maple leaf and the grey underside of the willow, recognizes the flight of an oriole and wonders at the suspension of sound as the cold turns rain to snow. Seager's novel is *written*, thought out, felt and everywhere intelligibly dramatized. It seems to me that he has nothing more to learn about the art of writing in the style he has chosen to master, a style admirably flexible for moving between the general idea and the particular idiom, as *native* as anything that has been developed since Twain but with a larger freedom to include mind. It is another struggle, undergone in every American generation, to free the spirit from a dogging juvenility.

Five novelists, with as many polarities: through melodrama, surrealism or social realism, all of them agree with Thoreau that, more than ever, "most men lead lives of quiet desperation." England is stalled by the intellectual-frigid snobs and the sour charities of a dreary middle class; America is eroding under the drift of the Philistines and the Third Order of Adam. Male and female shudder inside their separate skins; the collapse of the mind follows the death in the groin. Adolescence is the beast in the jungle. . . . Prose fiction, eminently suited to charting the modes of our dying, can restore, whenever its ingenuity is encompassed by a critical design, negotiable modes of life.

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# *A Quaker with a Renaissance Imagination*

*MARIANNE MOORE*

CAREY THOMAS OF BRYN MAWR, by *Edith Finch.* Harper & Brothers. $2.50.

CAREY THOMAS WAS A QUAKER, with "an almost Renaissance imagination." She "gloried in combat and movement" and as advised at home, found it "more profitable to think about what she did believe than what she did not believe." She "never wasted energy in vain regrets," was "critical of praise" and could make use of reprimand. She had a passion for "joining in and setting things straight." "Slovenly enunciation or muffled tones irritated her." As a child she resented "having to listen in Bible class to a young woman preaching about simplicity, who must have spent an hour or two arranging 'the horrible little curls' that adorned her head." Longing to go to Vassar, she said, "There is one thing I can do and that is study;" and exhilarated by preparatory subjects, "I wish the air were pure oxygen, and then as it says in our chemistry, our life would sweep through its fevered burning course in a few hours and we would live in a perfect delirium of excitement and would die vibrating with passion, for anything would be better than this lazy sluggish life." She was undeterred by "the awful amount of drudgery a first-rate education" involves, remarking later, "I cannot remember a time when I did not read at every available moment." Each succeeding phase of study seemed more interesting than the last. Of Wordsworth's *The Prelude* she said, "He spoke right to me. I was almost frightened as I found thought after thought there that had come to me so often;" and on discovering *Jane Eyre*, "My throat was parched . . . and cheeks fairly scorched. Oh, though I dare say it isn't a good book, yet it seems to me as if it were something worth while to write something that should have power to excite and intensely interest to such a degree." She was an irrepressible traveler, delighted in "horrid crags," "fir-clad ravines," "tall spires," and "dusky aisles touched with motes of color from stained windows." A rebel against ambiguous morality, she deplored over-concreteness in religion, yet could say of Leonardo da Vinci's sketch for the head of Christ and the Last

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Supper itself, "One bows before them as by magnetism and immediately one's past becomes a poor undeveloped thing because they have been wanting to it, and one's future full of longing without them." Unself-protective if a cause required her to be, she was not afraid of failure; though so honest against herself as to say upon falling in love, "I never came to anything before, I could not partially at least manage."

This account of frustration upon frustration and crusade after crusade to free the mind from legal and other barriers, extends in significance far beyond Quakerism, family, and period. Sobered by obstruction, with forces knit by the injustices of convention, Carey Thomas avowed what in life she contradicted: "Secrecy and guile are the only refuge of a down-trodden sex." The victim of gossip because she had discussed a scholastic matter with a German student on what her landlady termed "the betrothal sofa," she thenceforth behaved as she had in Cornell's "elegant garden of young men," "not only with decorum but marked decorum" and said years after, "Bryn Mawr need not be the less guarded because it was good."

The quest for a degree, from Leipsig to Göttingen, to Zürich, seems a phantasy of anachronism. When raising the Women's Fund to establish the Johns Hopkins medical school, Carey Thomas and four of her friends—"The Ladies" as they were called—stipulated that women be admitted on an equality with men and that entrance requirements should not be less rigid than those prescribed by the committee. Miss Thomas, who had been chairman, referring to herself and Miss Gwinn, said, "My father almost wept that two young women should take such a position;" Dr. Welch remarking to Dr. Osler, "We are lucky to get in as professors, for I am sure that neither you nor I would ever get in as students."

Any who have thought of Carey Thomas as ipso facto Bryn Mawr, will find it difficult to realize what handicap "the shrine of womanhood" once constituted, and that the virtual administrator and dean of a college was made president officially by a majority of but one vote; then only after years of "wary foresight in holding back and driving forward at the right moments," was grudgingly elected to the board of trustees.

Mr. Blackmur says that writing nowadays lacks the positiveness which derives from conviction. Carey Thomas had it, conversationally and in her classroom lectures on literature—living in another world from that of "half happiness," "half love," and "the little little poems" that were being written. "Clarity and assurance in her discrimination of values, impelled others toward their discriminations." She had the power of gauging under what circumstances special capabilities might flower most fully, "spared no pains to push and prune," and in faculty selections was willing to give every chance to a candidate in whom she saw promise—"even though he saw little in himself,"

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an insight confirmed by Bryn Mawr's continual loss of professors to larger colleges. Her name is associated with education and understandability; the points she made in 1901 nearly coinciding with those made by the "Harvard Committee on the objectives of a general education in a free society," in 1945.

Miss Finch's life of Wilfrid Scawen Blunt is hard to match—a thrilling tale and an objet d'art with the lustre of honesty. Again the author is, in her relentness justice, a Vermeer of circumstance and idiosyncrasy, yet she says of Carey Thomas, "the conflict between deliberate and natural behavior" made her "a little *farouche*." "She had no use for casual chitchat. Compelled to suffer it, the warmth of her manner chilled to bare civility, the heavy eyelids drooped over the brilliant eyes, her face became a mask of controlled impatience and distaste." One perceives, moreover, that as a disdainer of casuistry, Miss Finch believes in Carey Thomas and means it when she attributes an appearance of "despotism and double-dealing" in her, to "real open-mindedness" and "lapse of memory." Miss Gwinn is not less a personality than a type, in "the calculated impression" she made, "of knowing all the answers had she chosen to give them, and of thinking the struggling conversationalists a little dull."

This is certainly portraiture, with verisimilitude of personality matched by verity of setting. Student days in Germany come to life in the " 'really cultivated' Grüneissen sisters, three maiden ladies of whom Fräulein Mathilde had 'read every one' of the five hundred books on art that comprised their father's library," and "knew almost every picture in existence painted by an Old Master;" she also painted, though "given no chance to train her talent or see the originals." At Leipsig, fellow students "often opened doors for the two expatriates from Baltimore, though sometimes hesitated, then passed through determinedly first themselves;" yet as Carey Thomas said in her journal, "after a year they seemed to have developed 'a sort of contemptuous affection for us.' " Apparently subordinate descriptive statements have a startling precision, as where at Cornell Carey Thomas's parents "plodded about the campus on its hill above the town, appraised the fine old trees and the still rather new-looking halls." Bryn Mawr is unmistakable in "the autumn smell of dry and burning leaves;" in what is said of the Bible "on the square block of the speaker's desk at morning chapel, with Carey Thomas swiftly mounting the platform . . . " then "reading some great passage."

This account is a study in the art of quotation—that difficult and as Mr. Saintsbury felt, best method of exhibiting persons; the whole so neatly compacted, a mere summary of building expansion is not dull. Earlier chapters as writing, suffer by comparison with later—a fortuity which cumulative indebtedness soon forgives. The book is a performance, as biography and as the portrait of one who in her devotion to woman, was an impassioned emancipator of the mind.

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# *Historian's Apprenticeship*

*HUBERT CANFIELD*

THE JOURNALS OF FRANCIS PARKMAN, edited by *Mason Wade*. Harper & Bros. 2 vols. $10.00.

THIS IS A BELATED NOTICE of *The Journals of Francis Parkman*, but it may be mentioned that their publication last fall was itself unduly posthumous. Parkman died in 1893. After two of his early biographers had winnowed them for their own purposes, all trace of the *Journals* was lost. Almost forty years later, Mason Wade, at work on a new biography, looked high and low for them in this country and Canada. As a last resort, he went to Parkman's old house in Boston where a member of the family let him visit the historian's study on the top floor. It was an unused room, still furnished as Parkman had left it, and there in his desk were the Journals, together with a collection of notebooks and correspondence, all of which had been willed to the Massachusetts Historical Society.

After reading a publisher's blurb one turns to the book itself with a mild surmise and the mildness is unrelieved by finding Bernard De Voto quoted on the jacket. "Parkman," he says, "remains the greatest American historian, and here is an enormous amount of material that lights up the workings of his mind, the processes by which he acquired and explored material, the bases of his judgment, his working habits. . . . (Its) publication is, for anyone who is interested in American history and American literature, momentous."

It is true that Francis Parkman probably remains the greatest American historian; but his methods—the reliance on field work and on hard-earned first-hand acquaintance with the people and the modes of life about which he wrote—are so well known that the extra evidence here is scarcely "momentous." Mason Wade has already covered the ground in his excellent *Francis Parkman: Heroic Historian*, and Parkman himself carefully indicated his sources throughout his books. To those already familiar with Parkman's work, then, the present volumes offer little that is new, although they have a supplementary value; and as for those who are not, it is to be hoped that they will be moved to read the major works, and so discover for themselves the writer who, by virtue of his literary excellence, "made history more exciting than romance."

*The Journals of Francis Parkman* is chiefly a record of excursions and journeys made during a few weeks or months in the years 1841 to 1846. Thus

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Parkman wrote the first when he was seventeen and the last when he was twenty-three. In an introduction to each Journal, Mr. Wade has sketched in the necessary background, giving an outline of Parkman's life at that particular time. Following the Journals are the historian's Notebooks, written during miscellaneous later years; mostly consisting of the briefest of entries, with now and then a purple passage: Mr. Wade's notes at the ends of the volumes fill the gaps where only a name or reference appears in the Journals themselves.

In his freshman or sophomore year at Harvard, Parkman made up his mind to write a history of the American forest and the American Indian. As the idea matured it evolved into the plan for that history of *France and England in North America* which occupied the remainder of his life. There was obviously an inner compulsion at work, for, recalling his youth, he said (in the third person): "His thoughts were always in the forest, whose features possessed his waking and sleeping dreams, filling him with vague cravings impossible to satisfy."

The Journals of 1841 and 1842 record attempts at least to allay those cravings. The first Journal was written during a summer excursion through the White Mountains and into the Maine woods; the second, during a trip to the battlefields of the Seven Years' War around Lakes George and Champlain and then along the Canadian borders of Vermont and New Hampshire. These Journals contain some vivid writing, and give evidence of their author's gift for keen characterization. More important is the understanding we get of Parkman's insatiable energy, which drove him to try to encompass in a few weeks a lifetime of half-savage experience and to climb more heights and row or paddle longer hours than his companions had heart or kidney for. Probably those companions deserve sympathy. They were college boys, a different one each year, and they had counted on a pleasure jaunt. Parkman complained bitterly of them:

> "Last time you catch me walking this time of day," said Dan. "Amen," said I, "we will set out before sunrise tomorrow." . . . "We made beds of hemlock boughs and essayed to sleep but bugs, mosquitoes and 'no-see-'ems' swarmed innumerable. White cursed the woods and me for leading him into such a scrape." . . . "White was eternally grumbling and lagging behind."

Except for the European Journal (1843-44), all the Journals from here on show Parkman avidly on the trail of historical material. Nor was the European trip a real exception. Made primarily for his health, which was near collapse, it greatly broadened his horizon by helping him understand the Catholicism and the Latin civilization that played major parts in New France.

The succeeding Journals recount journeys to scenes of English and French action in the northeastern states, the Great Lakes region and Canada; he saw

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what there was to see and collected oral traditions of people and events not then so far distant. Last in the series is the Oregon Trail Journal of 1846, written while he traversed the plains to the Rocky Mountains and lived with Sioux Indians who were still "wild" and would have been at home in the Stone Age.

Throughout those years all was grist for Francis Parkman; he lived solely to prepare himself to write his History. In Rome he had spent a week in a monastery of the Passionists, adhering to their daily routine and taking part in their devotions. During long hours in his cell he could look at the Colosseum close outside the window. Later he wrote:

> A more intimate acquaintance with them (the monasteries) and their inmates was needful for my purposes. I was led into a convent by the same motives that two years later led me to become domesticated in the lodges of the Sioux Indians, with the difference that I much preferred the company of the savages to that of the monks.

If the Journals give ample evidence of Parkman's tireless search for facts and experience, they also occasionally reveal him as the typical, self-assured product of Federalist Boston. As far as he was concerned, the idealists at Brook Farm were "she-philosophers." He went to a meeting of Fourierites and reported: "They say there is a system of laws by which the world is to be governed 'harmoniously', and that they have discovered those laws." This news was so unimpressive that the name of a chief speaker at the meeting escaped him and Horace Greeley was set down in the Journal as Horace Grant.

Parkman was even inclined to be contemptuous of the country and backwoods people whom he met on his journeys. It came as a surprise when he stopped at a cabin and heard his uncouth host, one Abbot, speak a familiar language and express a sentiment that was Parkman's own:

> Abbot sat cobbling his shoe . . . but as I came up he turned and remarked that he was not a disciple of St. Crispin but only an occasional follower. As I was marvelling at this unexpected display of erudition, his wife thrust her head from the door and exclaimed, "Here, supper's ready." . . . We walked in, where Abbot astonished us still more by comparing the democratic levelers to Procrustes, who wished to reduce all men to the same dimensions by his iron bedstead. All this while he was squatting on his homemade chair, one leg cocked into the air . . . bushy hair straggling into his eyes and eating as if his life depended on his efforts.

Another entry is too significant to be overlooked. It was written after Parkman (aged twenty) had attended Sunday service aboard a British government steamer on a passage from Gibraltar to Malta. One wonders if it was ever read by his father, a Unitarian clergyman:

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> Here in this old world, I seem, thank Heaven, to be carried about half a century backwards in time. As far as religion is concerned, there are the ceremonies of the Catholic Church; and the English litany, with rough soldiers and sailors making the responses. A becoming horror of dissenters, especially Unitarians, prevails everywhere. No one cants here of the temperance reform, or of systems of diet—eat, drink and be merry is the motto everywhere, and a stronger and hardier race of men than those around me now never laughed at the doctors. Above all there is no canting of peace. A wholesome system of coercion is manifest in all directions—thirty-two pounders looking over the bows —piles of balls on deck—muskets and cutlasses hung up below—the red jackets of marines—the honest prayer that success should crown all these warlike preparations, yesterday responded to by fifty voices. There was none of the new-fangled suspicion that such belligerent petitions might be averse to the spirit of a religion that inculcates peace as its foundation. And I firmly believe that there was as much hearty faith and worship in many of those men as in a feeble consumptive wretch at home, who when smitten on one cheek literally turns the other likewise—instead of manfully kicking the offender into the gutter.

Parkman's seven-part history of *France and England in North America,* and its epilogue, *The Conspiracy of Pontiac,* tell a story that is not yet finished and that we are involved in today. The struggle of the French and English on this continent first appeared to Parkman as a "struggle between feudal, militant and Catholic France and democratic, industrial and Protestant England." Probably he hit his stride as a historian when he recognized it as "a contest for colonial and maritime supremacy," linked to the seemingly everlasting struggle for power in Europe.

Probably, too, stranger things have happened than that it should have been a Boston Brahmin who immortalized the American forest; a virtual recluse who made live forever the coureurs de bois, the early explorers and settlers, the partisans, missionaries and royal emissaries; a chronic invalid who depicted two and a half centuries of action along a rugged coast and within an enormous wilderness—action transcendently dramatic with "the good and ill, the baseness and nobleness, the foulness and purity, the love and hate, the pride, passion, truth, falsehood, fierceness, and tenderness that battle in the restless heart of man."

Francis Parkman was born out of his time, and if he rests now in Boston's Valhalla, Mount Auburn Cemetery, it is not among his natural peers. In the Church of St. John, at Malta, is his true company. There he saw the effigy of La Valette

> on the sarcophagus that contained his bones in a deep niche. His hands were clasped—his face had an expression of deep devotion—

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> his sword was at his side, and his helmet lay near him. Just opposite was the tomb of one who was a cardinal, and lay there in his pontifical robes, with his sword girt to his side. His hands were crossed on his broad breast. He looked like a gallant soldier, who had done good service to Christianity. . . .

And though born out of his time, perhaps Parkman spoke out of all time in the last—and prophetic—paragraph of the last volume of his History:

> She (the United States) has become a nation that may defy every foe but that most dangerous of all foes, herself, destined to a majestic future if she will . . . rally her powers from the race for gold and the delirium of prosperity . . . and turn some fair proportion of her vast mental forces to other objects than material progress and party politics. She has tamed the savage continent, peopled the solitude, gathered wealth untold . . . and now it remains for her to prove, if she can, that the rule of the masses is consistent with the highest growth of the individual; that democracy can give the world a civilization as mature and pregnant, ideas as energetic and vitalizing, and types of manhood as lofty and strong as any of the systems which it boasts to supplant.

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# *Anesthetic Film Criticism*

*GEORGE BARBAROW*

WHATEVER MAY BE THE ATTITUDE of intellectuals toward motion pictures, their bias is certainly not esthetic. Thus it is characteristic that Parker Tyler writes: "(it is) not my purpose to provide evidence that American movies constitute high art," and as if to prove that he wants no part of any discussion or evidence that they are *not* art either, he continues with: "the true field of the movies is not *art* but *myth*." This is as succinct a statement of the reaction of the intelligentsia to Hollywood films as can be found. Anesthetized by the clouds of distinctly bad art coming out of the movie factories, sensitive observers have assumed an *anesthetic attitude*. Because they cannot keep silent in the face of a great phenomenon of our times, The Hollywood Movie, they write a great deal about it, but always in special ways. Tyler toys with psychoanalysis, Dwight Macdonald's interest is politico-economic, and Robert Warshow uses current films as springboards for sociological observations.

In most cases, movies are bad, so bad as to inspire the easy generalization that they are absolutely unworthy of any serious discussion as art. Their standard level of stupidity and dullness is indeed so pervasively repulsive that it has moved one heroic snob to say he "would rather see a third-rate play than the best movie ever made," and even the most sympathetic viewer often wonders why he wastes his time in the moviehouses. Emerging for the hundredth time in a state of acute depression induced by exposure to a double feature show, he nevertheless goes back for more, hoping always to find something valuable.

Meanwhile, anything goes in criticism. It is a fundamental tenet among intellectuals that movies are not art, but merely suitable excuses for general remarks about the state of the mass cultural climate, quite apart from any esthetic characteristics that movies may or may not have. So we learn that there is such a thing as "the Western" that satisfies (or corrupts, as the case may be) certain groups in our society in the light of well-defined fears and desires; but at no time does the observer inquire whether there might be such things as "good Westerns" or "bad Westerns." The spectacle of an audience of children cheering on the hero in the last reel of a Saturday afternoon is in all ways uncritical. Since the children are apparently moved equally

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by *all* Westerns, the adult (who pretends not to be moved at all) easily concludes that all Westerns are pretty much alike; and since he has already decided that movies aren't art, the questions of goodness and badness that are inseparable from valid esthetic criticisms are never taken up. At this point is formed the habit of anesthetic criticism which is not applied to recognized art forms with impunity. The snob did drama the courtesy of admitting the existence of *third-rate* plays, thus implying that there are second- and first-rate plays. He was being snobbish only about movies, a cultural field where the best is thought to be roughly the same as the worst.

The anesthetic habit, with its resulting bias in favor of exclusively politico-economic-psychoanalytical-sociological attitudes toward films, is useful enough as the intellectual response to the vast majority of Hollywood's products, the every-day products that even the wildest of fanatical apologists must admit to be mediocre; but the habit itself is pernicious in that it effectively prevents real criticism of the rare specimen that swims into our field of vision once in two or three years: the serious, or "adult" film. Appealing to our developed intelligence, this special film requires an esthetic response that our intellectual movie-fan is not equipped to make, since he has been drugged into the habit of thinking about movies only in terms of erotic symbolism, or monopoly capitalism, or the problems of the isolated individual in society. For the right esthetic answer, he must then rely upon certain standardized patterns that he applies to other, more respectable, art forms. The film that gives him an emotional jolt may remind him of a play, or choreographic forms, or some of the shots may call for comparison with well-known schools of painting or still photography. Rarely if ever does he compare this movie with other movies, and so the film fails to get the criticism it deserves—criticism in terms of whether it is a good movie in its own right.

The intellectual is not equipped to make esthetic film judgments primarily because he has never taken the trouble to thresh out questions of goodness and badness while watching that great mass of ordinary films he automatically despises for non-esthetic reasons. Assuming that one is pretty much the same as another, and that all of them are important only for the light they throw upon contemporary social customs, our usually intelligent observer wallows in abysmal ignorance about even the most obvious aspects of film technique. Like the reader of pulp fiction suddenly confronted with James Joyce, the critic cannot understand a genuine film whose "grammar" is anything but rudimentary, and "as everybody knows," the grammar of pulp fiction is of no importance. Or is it? We should never forget that we are in no position to dismiss pulp grammar until its cheapness has been demonstrated to us by an intimate acquaintance with Joyce's writing; we must know both before we can choose either. Unfortunately, serious movie criticism is too often patheti-

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cally uninformed. The highbrow moviegoer's interest in the nature of the medium he so confidently discusses is usually limited to wondering how a certain trick was accomplished. He will ask: Was it a dummy tossed out of the window or was it a live stunt man (falling into a net, perhaps?). The more important question of whether that same shot was made with a wide-angle or a telephoto lens is never asked; indeed it takes some time to convince our expert that different lenses make any difference in what he sees, and it is virtually impossible to make him understand that the difference is significant at all. Tyler, for instance, calls the optical devices "the magic of the movies," and stubbornly refuses to think of them as anything else, exactly like a rustic exposed to radio for the first time.

The anesthetic film critic, an enthusiast for Charlie Chaplin when he discovered that entertainer approximately ten years too late, was so tremendously moved by Mr. Chaplin that he immediately started to talk about this great artist, not in terms of his art, but with millions of fulsome words directed at the idea of The Tramp, or The Clown, or The Mime, or The Isolated Individual in Society. How he loved the "little fellow!" What he failed to observe was that this little fellow understood where he was in relation to the camera, and seemed to have an almost divine genius for knowing what was effective on the screen and what was not. This doesn't mean that the values the critic inflated out of all proportion aren't necessary to a full understanding of Chaplin, but they would have very little significance without Chaplin's *cinematic* skill. The fact that his "tricks" weren't obvious and crude (except at the very beginning of his career) caused the highbrow to miss the point, and it is not difficult to see how the point was missed when it is remembered that this critic had already spent a good part of his life sneering at the movie medium and explaining how much better a third-rate play is. At that very time, Chaplin was in the process of learning the characteristics of the medium, and was gradually inventing and developing a genuine movie form.

A few years later, there arose another formal school: the Eisenstein-Pudovkin-Kuleshov Axis. This was an excellent place for the radical intellectual to discover values, for the Russians went energetically to work after the Revolution with the direct intent of using the movie medium for a special end: to put across an ideology. While pursuing this aim, and by considerable thoughtful experiment, they did some first-rate work, and evolved a couple of forms. The Russian Forms are cinematic rationalizations of two themes: the epic of mass revolt in time of crisis, and how you can become a Bolshevik although you are only an ignorant worker.

The driving spirit of the Russians hit the serious critic like a runaway train, for he had just about concluded that Socialism was both good and necessary. What is more, Eisenstein and the Montage clique were not at all

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backward in explaining how they did it, and supplied their disciples with diagrams about film-structure and shot-composition. It was not only scientific: it was rational and philosophical; it was Dialectical Materialism combined with Socialist Realism. It was also Art, avant-garde art. The appeal was overwhelming, for the films were brilliant, even if they were actually glorified propaganda vehicles. Radically inclined intellectuals fell for the whole line, not particularly because of any inherent gullibility, but because they had never studied the esthetic possibilities and limitations of the movie medium itself, and so they had no solid knowledge upon which to build accurate comparison. Some even attacked Chaplin, calling his work inferior because he did not use Montage (the word that served to describe the Russian methods)—thus the beloved Charlie was not making movies in the right way.

The irony is that whole areas of cinematic discussion were dropped at once when the excuse went out of fashion (the day the Russian Propaganda Chiefs discovered that Montage was incomprehensible to the Russian masses). Meanwhile, conservatives, at the time of the Montage Rage, had ridiculed the Russians for their "wild shots," partly because the shots and the intricate constructions were often extremely difficult to understand, but mostly because (as conservatives) they were profoundly opposed to the Soviet political ideology. During that period, the radicals had completely suspended any natural aptitudes for disbelief. The Eisensteinian theoretical forms were embraced almost to the exclusion of any other methods of moviemaking. The films were both good and exciting; one never admitted confusion, but analyzed the wild shots ideologically, with the aid of official theoretical handbooks.

The heat-and-hokum generated during these wranglings makes for difficult reading to-day, since the basis for most intellectual interest in movies is non-esthetic. Naturally, any esthete who takes up the subject seriously is in for trouble. The conditions that make for good art (a relatively long tradition, an established sympathetic audience, a stable society) have not been present in this new field, and whatever has been accomplished is confusingly sporadic. Except for certain tried-and-true types of films, such as short comedies, Westerns, gangsters, and horror pictures, the forms have been interrupted and frustrated on all sides. It is especially discouraging to study the effect of the sound track, which made the transcription of plays fairly easy, and encouraged the cheap, non-cinematic way to present motives and ideas (by a flood of talk, so that almost nothing is done with the camera).

The movie medium requires the most precise handling in order to arouse and hold the spectator at all. As in music, a "note" is struck (by the shot), to be replaced by another. We cannot turn back to re-read a sentence, nor is there any way to stop the action by laughter and applause as in stage performances. This is essentially an optical illusion, worked out with an implacable,

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irrevocable time-scheme, so that ways must be found to arrange the shots in effective order, and eventually an effective form is evolved, assuming that there is no interference with this process by the well-meaning but misguided grafting-on of the structure of some alien form. It can be stated categorically that no film is a work of art, high, low, or medium, unless it has a clearly distinguishable shape that sets it apart *as a film*, a shape so thoroughly a part of the whole effect that, if one wished to translate it into another medium (such as the stage), the result would be a retention of the form, and the drama critic would say: "This is a bad play, because it has cinematic form," recognizing at once that there is something fundamentally different and obtrusive about an alien form. Turning the situation around, myriads of plays are made over into movies without arousing consistent or accurately informed hostility on the part of the "critics." In part, this explains why *Henry V* was thought to be worth extended discussion and applause. "I see they are putting fairly accurate versions of Shaw, Shakespeare, and O'Neill on the screen," says the critical snob. He then concludes that, "Hollywood must be growing up." This should not be taken as a disparagement of educated people, or even of a group of distinguished dramatists. It is always better to see a movie with adult material in it than one completely bare of ideas. The point is that neither is a work of art, for—decorated or not with ideas—neither can be compared in terms of form, or cinematically. The *Henry V* enthusiast exclaims that "This is no ordinary movie; this is *Shakespeare!*"

But when is a movie not a movie? All that need be said about *Henry V* is that it is a bad movie, unless the critic wishes to go on and show in detail why it is bad. In spite of adult and piquant ideas brought forth by the actors, in spite of certain advantages in the sound-recording of speeches, the movie version of a play tends to be the more aggressively wretched the more accurately it is transferred to the screen. On account of the great respect that the producer has for the methods of the dramatist, the structure of the play is imitated in the film with a dedicated, whole-souled, solemn, deferential, and iron-clad rigidity. At this point we must give up the search, or go back for another look at the lowly Western.

The Western form is recognized, or recognizable, by almost everybody. After thirty or forty years of intensive development, the horse-opera is beginning to have a fairly stable shape, easily calculable, especially by the producers (one of the best sends a crew on location and gets enough footage for six pictures at one time). Therefore, everything about Westerns is form, like a modified strophic 32 bar popular song (stabilized at A-A-B-A). On this low level, it is customary to remark that this kind of shape is mere formula, and thus to dismiss it as vulgar and inartistic, but this we cannot afford to do, because, as we have seen, our critics have persistently refused to learn film

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grammar (to say nothing of film forms); a trip to the kindergarten will do no harm.

The Western form is well adapted to its story, or the story to the form: they are inextricably woven together. There is an introductory chase involving the stealing of cattle, often including the killing of a rancher whose daughter struggles on alone with the management of the ranch. Somewhere in this section the hero appears, and the time and place of his arrival determine what he discovers and the circumstances of his being locked up (or threatened with jail) in the second part. This first part is expository, with plenty of action (cattle driven, hard riding, shooting). The second part, concerned with the town (lawyer's office, jail, saloon, local denizens), is much slower and is primarily designed to establish all the characters. Ordinarily most Westerns fall down here because of careless workmanship, unskilled direction, and the temptations of the sound track. It must be remembered that the attitude of the maker is routine, and the producer's only interest is commercial. Incidentally, any moviemaker with talent and the desire to make a good movie could use this form, especially if he did not attempt to turn it into a super-Western, or "Western-Epic," which is unbearably slow and pretentious. All that is necessary is to stick to the established pattern.

The third part, the setting of the trap to catch the rustlers, often calls for night work, slow and murky, and here the suspense is built up, which at last breaks out into the Big Sequence, or Final Chase, where the trap is sprung, and much shooting and hard riding emerge as a natural consequence of everything that has gone before. It is almost all crisis, and expressed in visual action, and it truly deserves to be called cinematic, for there is nothing comparable to it in other art forms (except perhaps, and by analogy, the presto-finale of the classical symphony). At the end, which is very short, the hero and girl say goodbye in some characteristic, non-sexual manner. It is the same thing as saying goodbye to the dissipated tension that reached a peak barely a minute before.

This Western form has been sketched in some detail because it *is* form, and it has been evolved because it works, which is to say that it gives scope to the movie camera. Being clear and consequential, it reveals at once the capabilities of the moviemaker. Needless to say, it is perenially abused because it is not taken seriously ("The kids don't care, so why should we?"), and because the reward for a good job is hardly more than the usual minimum wages. Nevertheless, it is sturdy and foolproof. A good one is made occasionally; and a good Western can be studied as a movie because it doesn't pretend to be anything else. It is pure delight to watch it.

Notably, only the esthetic approach is at all valid for Westerns. The status-quo morality is merely a formal excuse for having a picture-show here,

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and if there ever was any social significance it has become as acceptable to everybody as fire engines. Nor is there any psychoanalytical or political digging in this mine; the ore assays very low in that kind of material. As a result, the intellectual critic avoids this form once he has made the fatal assumption that form is not his business. He protests that the Western is formula, and "formula kills art," which is patently wrong. The only thing that consistently kills art is an acute shortage of artists. When the artist is absent, the form degenerates into formula; when the artist is at work, form returns, giving pleasure to all who are aroused by the experience of art.

The anesthetic critic at his best does not pretend to be discussing films as art, yet he does the cinema a disservice for this very reason. Robert Warshow recently did an excellent essay on "The Gangster as Tragic Hero"* in which the sociology is provocative, to say the least, and penetrating, yet he might just as well have been writing about radio or pulp magazines as "the movies." There is no discussion about the difference between good and bad gangster films, although he gives himself a good cue by discovering what the typical gangster-story is: the individual, wishing to assert his egotism, rises in the world by a series of brutal successes, and as soon as he *becomes* an individual, he is in danger. Partly because of this isolation at the top ("The World Is Yours" idea in *Scarface*), and partly because he has alienated his friends by his ruthless brutality, the gangster is smashed at the end. That is the story, but what form does it take? We aren't told, yet this must be significant material, and some moviemakers must have done better than others with this type, so why aren't we told about the cinematics of it? Is it possible that this particular form, the gangster film, might provide the structure of a genuine work of art?

These questions are never answered by the consciously intelligent film critics, because esthetics are traditionally not the film critic's affair. While drama critics are always concerned about whether or not the latest exhibit is a good play (first-, second-, or third-rate), the movie experts never know if *The Best Years of Our Lives* is really worth seeing or not.

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* (Partisan Review, Feb. '48)

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